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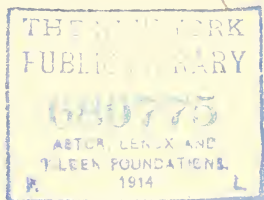
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*Archbishop of New York.*

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## PREFACE.

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IN these days of religious discussion, when many who are not of the household of the faith, are cast about by every wind of doctrine, this volume of Instructions on the Gospels for Lent, should prove to be a striking testimony of the unchangeableness of Catholic teaching. The book was originally published in 1834. The lessons drawn from the Gospels and the prayers which follow prove the Reverend Author to have been a man of deep learning and solid piety. The style of the book is all that has undergone any radical change. The first issue consisted of two very small volumes which might properly have been called a pocket edition. The present edition is much larger and is printed from new and clear type. Many typographical errors were found in the original—particularly in the Gospels which appear at the head of each Instruction. In the body of the work many words and expressions had to be changed. Some words had become obsolete—others did not seem to express clearly the mind of the author. Such expressions have been corrected. Another and rather important change which it has been seen fit to make is to omit the Sunday Instructions from the present volume and add them to volume two which is shortly to be issued.

In the original edition the Gospels for many Sundays of the ecclesiastical year were omitted. These have all been supplied and will appear in their proper places in volume two of the present edition. In supplying these Instructions care has been taken to follow as closely as possible the style of the original work.

In its present form the book should prove acceptable to both priests and people. In it, it is to be hoped, that the busy priest may find hints for Lenten Sermons. Religious and others who make daily meditations may also find this volume of assistance. With very little effort the Instructions may be divided into at least two points, and the prayer which is found at the end of each Instruction would serve as a beautiful spiritual bouquet, which might be called to mind from time to time during the day. The Catholic layman will find in the Instructions a clear exposition of Catholic Doctrine founded on the teaching of Christ Himself, which will assist him in the practise of his religion, and will enable him in case of necessity to give a reason for the faith that is in him.

That the present edition may do as much as did the first to promote the glory of God is the earnest wish and prayer of the

EDITOR.

Feast of the Purification,  
February 2, 1904.



## ASH WEDNESDAY.

### ON THE BLESSED ASHES.

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*Memento homo, quia pulvis es,  
Et in pulverem reverteris.*

Remember, man, that dust thou art,  
And into dust thou shalt return.

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### INSTRUCTION.

THE ceremony of sprinkling ashes on the heads of the faithful this day, is instructive and significant. We are now entering upon Lent, a time particularly dedicated to fasting, prayer, mortification and self-denial. By these penitential exercises, we must endeavor to seek a reconciliation with God by the means which are most likely to obtain his mercy. By receiving ashes upon our heads, we appear before him in the posture of penitents, and, provided we accompany this *outward ceremony* with an

*internal sorrow* and contrition for our sins, a true repentance, and firm purpose of amendment, we comply with the views of the church, and shall reap the advantages of mercy and pardon : but without such interior dispositions, we shall find little benefit ; for, though we may join with others in the ceremony of the day, we only deserve the same reproach God made to the Jews by his prophet, Isaias xxix., *This people honor me with their lips, but their hearts are far from me.* Therefore, without the interior sentiments of sorrow for past sins, and resolutions of amendment, which God and his church require, the holiest and best institutions can be of little advantage to those who refuse them or neglect to observe them as they ought.

The words pronounced by the priest when he puts the ashes on our heads, *Remember, man,* etc. are a seasonable memento of our mortality, an excellent and useful admonition, designed to put us in mind that we drew our origin from dust, and that, though we may here indulge a haughty pride and love of ourselves, or admire our own beauty, strength and talents, still, alas ! *we are no more than dust, and into dust we must return.*

The haughty monarch at whose despotic frown thousands tremble, on whose will the lives and fortunes of so many depend, and

whose very name spreads terror into distant realms, what is he but dust : from dust he came, and like the meanest of his slaves, to dust he shall return, and bury all his glory and power in the grave. The rich and opulent, whose affluent fortunes cause them to be so much courted and admired by the world, who know not the want of anything they desire, and seem to enjoy every happiness, may, from the significant ceremony of this day, learn to place no confidence in their riches ; for dust they are, and into dust they shall shortly return. That beauteous female, in whose countenance and charming mien all the graces seem to dwell, and who is the object of so much admiration, what is she, alas ! but a painted piece of clay, formed out of the dust of the earth, into which she must again return. O salutary thought ! how effectually dost thou pull down our pride, and remove the high opinion we entertain of ourselves ! The rich and mighty are on a level with the poor and indigent, and with them must share the same fate. Death is not a respecter of persons. It seizes on all alike, the old and young, rich and poor, high and low, are all equally subject to it. *And as all men are formed from dust, so shall they return to dust again.*

This lesson the church reads to us this day ;

and the inference we ought to draw from it, is, to be careful to prepare ourselves for death. This, though it ought to be our greatest concern at all times, is an exercise peculiarly suitable to the season of Lent ; for which reason, the church begins this solemn fast with this significant ceremony, that by reminding us of our mortality, we may seriously apply ourselves to the grand affair of our salvation ; that when death comes, we may be found ready and prepared ; and that when the body returns to dust, the soul may ascend to heaven, and there be received into the society of the blessed.

## PRAYER.

ETERNAL Author of all things ! sovereign Lord of life and death ! imprint on my mind the remembrance of my origin and of my last end. *Let me frequently reflect that I must die.* This is the sentence thou hast pronounced upon all men, nor do I wish, or seek for an exemption. I submit to thy decrees, O, wise Disposer of all things, and am truly content that my life and death are at thy disposal. In thy hands are the moments of my life. Thou hast told me I must die, but hast mercifully concealed from me both the time, as well as the manner of my death, in order to preserve me from a false and presumptuous security, and

that I might be, at all times, ready to obey thy call. I bow humbly down and adore the decrees of thy merciful providence, O, Lord, and submit to thy will in all things. One petition I earnestly make, and, O, my God, may thy goodness vouchsafe to grant it! Take me not from hence with my sins unpardoned, and before I have reconciled myself to thee. Prepare me, dear Lord, for thyself; and then, in thine own due time, take me to thyself. May I now at this holy season, so prepare myself by works of penance, as hereafter to find mercy at thy hands.

May I now begin to live for thee, by daily dying to myself and the world. I must one day die, and be eternally separated from all things here. How little reason then have I to be fond of what I cannot long enjoy, and of which I know not how soon I may be deprived! *Must we die? Yes; we must die.* How necessary, then, is it, that we should prepare for death. I acknowledge this necessity, O, my God! and beg the aid of thy grace to assist me in my preparation.

Withdraw my heart and affections, dear Lord! from this vain world, and fix them on thyself alone. O, may I in all my works, never forget my last end, but prepare myself for it by the constant exercises of a holy life! Then shall

my happy soul hereafter sing, with joy and triumph, O, death, where is thy sting? O, grave, where is thy victory? Since, by dying, I have gained heaven, and a happy eternity. Then shall I forever sing a hymn of praise and thanksgiving to thee, O, thou bounteous Author of eternal happiness! and bless thy name through all eternity.

GOSPEL.—*Matt. vi. 16-21.*

*At that time ; Jesus said to his disciples :* When you fast be not as the hypocrites, sad. For they disfigure their faces, that they may appear to men to fast. Amen I say to you, they have received their reward. But thou, when thou fastest, anoint thy head, and wash thy face : that thou appear not to men to fast, but to thy Father, who is in secret : and thy Father, who seeth in secret, will reward thee. Lay not up for yourselves treasures on earth : where the rust and moth consume, and where thieves break through and steal. But lay up for yourselves treasures in heaven : where neither rust nor moth doth consume, and where thieves do not break through, nor steal. For where thy treasure is, there is thy heart also.

#### INSTRUCTION.

IN this gospel Christ gives us excellent instructions relative to fasting, (for, whatever in-

formation he gave his disciples belongs to all Christians) and hence the church reads them to her children, as useful admonitions at the beginning of Lent, that teaching them in what manner they are to observe this apostolical fast, they may so discharge its duties, as not to deprive themselves of the benefit of so holy an institution.

Our blessed Lord, in the first place, gives us a necessary precaution against all pharisaical and hypocritical affectation in fasting, or a desire of being taken notice of, and commended for it by others. This was the crime for which the Pharisees were condemned by our Saviour ; they placed all the merit of their fasting in the public practises of it. Therefore Christ warns us not to make any alteration in our dress or conduct that may seem to proceed from affectation or vanity, that dangerous worm which will devour all the fruit of our good works, and make them of no avail.

Having thus cautioned us against *pride* and *hypocrisy in our fasts*, Christ instructs us how we should fast, so as to merit a reward from our heavenly Father. We are now called to the annual observation of Lent, that by a forty days fast we may expiate the sins and excesses of which we have been guilty; that by doing penance we may

reconcile ourselves to God, whom we have offended, and for this purpose we should be careful to observe it according to the spirit of the church, and with the dispositions of sincere penitents. This is what the Apostle calls, "*The acceptable time, the day of salvation.*" The ministers of God, like so many Baptists, now exhort us to fly from the wrath to come, and bring forth worthy fruits of penance. It is by true and sincere repentance, that we must render our fasting acceptable to God: for if we pay no other regard to this holy season, than by making a change in our diet, we shall be far from keeping it in the manner God requires. The fast which God has chosen is to loose the bands of iniquity, to convert ourselves to him with our whole hearts, in "*fasting, weeping, and mourning, to rend our hearts and not our garments, by true contrition and sorrow for our sins.*" God has promised mercy and pardon to those who in obedience to the voice of the church, relinquish their sinful habits, apply themselves to the exercises of mortification, self-denial, retirement, and recollection; to frequent prayer, spiritual reading, alms-deeds, and works of charity, without having any other object in view than our own spiritual advantage. How infatuated then must not those Christians be,



who neglecting to turn so salutary an institution to their benefit, proceed in their usual careless way; who, whilst they comply with the injunction of the church, in outward fasting, imbibe nothing of her spirit, but instead of doing penance for their sins, rather add to their number, by the abuse of the remedies and mercies now offered!

It is not so with the pious Christian, the genuine child of the church. He begins this solemn fast with a due sense of the advantages to be reaped therefrom, he calls to mind the excesses and negligences of his past life, and condemns himself to the wholesome penance of self-denial; he endeavors, by diligence and favor to regain what he has lost. Convinced by experience of the weakness and corruption of his nature, and that his passions are likely to gain the ascendancy over him, if not suppressed by a prudent restraint, he throws the bridle of mortification over them, and endeavors to check and subdue them: in a word, he enters thoroughly into the sense of the church, and observes this holy time according to her spirit: this should be the rule of conduct of all those who would keep Lent, and reap the spiritual benefits which may be derived therefrom.

Our blessed Saviour gives us another salu-

tary admonition in this gospel, when he says, *lay up to yourselves treasures in heaven* : solid and permanent treasures, of which no outward force or violence, no secret fraud or any accident whatever can deprive us. Laying up treasures in heaven, is *the practise of good works*, which will follow us beyond the grave, and, like the seed sown upon good ground, produce a plentiful harvest : whereas all the trouble we take for this world, will prove of no advantage. Now the present is the season to lay up these heavenly treasures : when by fasting, prayer, and self-denial, by works of mercy and charity, we may not only cancel the obligations and debts we have contracted by our former sloth and negligence, but also increase our store, and procure to ourselves a fund in a bank that will never fail.

This is the lesson which the church reads to all her children in this day's gospel : she lays before them, in the most pressing terms, the necessity of making the best use of this most acceptable time, and exhorts them, by her ministers, not to defer their sincere conversion, but turn to the Lord our God, and to seek him whilst he is to be found : to seek him in a *sincere and humble manner* is the only certain way to find him ; and for our further encouragement, he has promised to hear us when we

call upon him, and that we shall find him when we thus seek him.

## PRAYER.

IT is thus, O, my God ! that I humble myself in thy presence, and with a deep sense of my past ingratitude, and frequent abuse of thy mercies, I now desire to seek thee, in *prayer and fasting*, that I may obtain pardon of those sins which have separated me from thee : perfect what thou hast begun in me, assist me, by thy grace, to find thee, and having found thee, dear Lord, by a sincere repentance, let me never lose thee again, by relapsing into my former crimes. I come to thee, as to the only physician of souls ; from thee alone, I seek a remedy for all the evils, with which I am afflicted. *I come to thee, who art the Way, the Truth, and the Life.* Grant that I may never more wander from the way which leads to thee. I believe in thee, who art the unerring Truth, and hope, through a lively faith, and prompt obedience to thy holy law, to obtain eternal life. Thou hast graciously promised to hear those who call upon thee ; hear then my prayers, and mercifully grant what I ask, to the glory of thy holy name, and the eternal benefit of my soul.

How often, O, gracious and merciful Lord,

hast thou heard me ! how often hast thou granted my request, and healed my sick and sinful soul ? But, alas ! what ungrateful returns have I made to thy goodness ? O, my God ! I am covered with shame and confusion at the sight of my ingratitude. Yet, O, Lord, continue thy mercy to me ; grant me now true sorrow and contrition for my sins, and grace never to offend thee more.

Ah, my God ! 'tis the love thou hast for me, that makes thee thus lenient towards me ; and shall I not love thee in return ? O, divine love ! come and inflame my heart and soul, that I may burn with the love of so gracious and loving a God. May I constantly and forever love thee, O, thou true and only life and happiness of my soul ! I will love thee, and thee alone, O, Lord ! for thou alone art the only object worthy of love : for the love of thee I will die to the world, and crucify my flesh with all its concupiscences : for the love of thee I will deny and mortify myself. I will fast, watch, pray, and do penance here, that thou mayest spare me hereafter.

## THURSDAY

BEFORE THE FIRST SUNDAY IN LENT.

GOSPEL.—*Matt. viii. 5.*

*At that time :* And when he had entered into Capharnaum, there came to him a Centurion, beseeching him, and saying: Lord, my servant lieth at home sick of the palsy, and is grievously tormented. And Jesus saith to him: I will come and heal him. And the Centurion making answer said: Lord, I am not worthy that thou shouldst enter under my roof: but only say the word, and my servant shall be healed. For I also am a man subject to authority, having under me soldiers, and I say to this, Go, and he goeth; and to another, Come, and he cometh; and to my servant, Do this, and he doeth it. And Jesus hearing this, marveled: and said to them that followed him: Amen I say to you, I have not found so great faith in Israel. And I say unto you, that many shall come from the east and the west, and shall sit down with Abraham, and Isaac, and Jacob in the kingdom of heaven: but the children of the kingdom shall be cast out into the exterior darkness; there shall be weeping and gnashing

of teeth. And Jesus said to the Centurion : Go, and as thou hast believed, so be it done to thee. And the servant was healed at the same hour.

#### INSTRUCTION.

SAINT MATTHEW, in telling us of the Centurion speaking to Jesus Christ in behalf of his sick servant, presents us with many precepts necessary and useful at all times, but particularly applicable to the present season : thus the Centurion beseeching Christ in behalf of his sick servant, is an admirable representation of a penitent sinner desiring to be reconciled to God. We are all, alas ! sinners, and the Church, who earnestly desires we should become sincere penitents, now invites us to go to Jesus Christ, and beseech him in behalf of our souls, grievously afflicted with the palsy of sin ; and for our encouragement, and assurance of success, she lays before us the example of this Roman officer, who, as soon as he had heard that Jesus was come to Capharnaum, immediately went thither, and laid open to him the necessity of his domestic, saying : “ *Lord, my servant lieth at home sick of the palsy, and is grievously tormented.*” In like manner, if we desire to recover the health of our souls, afflicted and dangerously ill under the pressure of

evil habits and vicious customs, now is the happy time, since Jesus our spiritual physician is come down to Capharnaum. We have now an opportunity of having recourse to him for our cure: but we must make no delay: let us not then think it a matter, which may be postponed; for if we refuse to go *now*, we may not have so favorable an opportunity *hereafter*. When the compassionate Saviour of the world told the Centurion that he would come and heal his servant, he immediately replied: *Lord, I am not worthy that thou shouldst enter under my roof.* O, excellent spirit of humility, which always renders both ourselves and our petitions acceptable to God. For nothing will sooner prevail with him to grant us mercy and pardon, than an humble acknowledgment of our unworthiness and misery.

“*The prayer of the humble shall pierce the clouds,*” and be heard by him, who *resisteth the proud and giveth grace to the humble.* Let us then humble ourselves in the presence of God, and confessing our unworthiness, say sincerely with the Centurion: “*Lord, I am not worthy that thou shouldst enter under my roof. Say but the word and my servant shall be healed.*” He reasoned very justly from the condition of life in which he himself was placed, being one of so much authority as to say to his servant, *Do*

*this*, and it was done, that Christ by his superior power need only *to speak*, and his word alone would have sufficient efficacy to cure his servant.

Faith and confidence in God are no less necessary than humility : if then we desire to obtain the pardon of our sins, we must firmly believe that God is both able and willing to forgive them : as no sin is greater in the sight of God than *despair*, we must be careful not to place any obstacle in the way of his mercy by our *diffidence* ; the shield of faith, and a firm confidence in his goodness is our best defense, to which he thus encourages us, saying : "*As I live I desire not the death of a sinner, but rather that he be converted and live.*" "*Come unto me, all you that labor and are burdened, and I will refresh you.*" Ah ! what greater encouragement can we desire ? Let us then approach him, at this holy time, with the humility and faith of the Centurion, and with him we shall be accepted. "*Go, and as thou hast believed, be it done unto thee ; and at the very hour his servant was healed.*" O, happy effect of a lively faith ! The same will be produced in the souls of those sincere penitents, who, in like manner, have recourse to God ; to such he will mercifully say : "*Son, be of good heart, thy sins are forgiven thee.*"



## PRAYER.

O JESUS, Saviour of the world ! speak those consoling words to my soul ! Ah, dearest Lord, behold I am sick and infirm, grievously tormented, and sorely troubled ; speak but the word, and I shall be healed. Thy power is great, thy mercy also is great, thou art therefore able and willing to forgive : pardon me then, and deliver me from the heavy burden of my sins. I acknowledge my unworthiness, and have just reason to fear the rigor of thy justice : but I will trust in thy infinite goodness. I cannot offend more than thou canst forgive ; and I firmly believe there is no sin so great that thou wilt not pardon it, upon a sincere repentance. Say then to me, as thou didst to the Centurion : “ *Go, and as thou hast believed, be it done unto thee :* ” and from that moment having obtained the health of my soul, I will praise and glorify thy holy name.

May thy holy name be forever blessed, and praised by all creatures, O, thou true and only Physician of souls ! may all poor sinners, who, like me, have experienced thy goodness, be grateful to thee : and, O, may I never more abuse thy bounty, nor forget the favors thou hast shown me : preserve me, dear Lord, from relapsing again into those sins from which thou

hast delivered me. May I daily endeavor to please thee, and increase in thy love. I desire to love thee above all things, and all other things only in and for thee. I can only be happy in loving thee, and am truly miserable when I do not love thee. May thy sweet love wholly possess my heart and soul until I come to possess and enjoy thee in heaven.

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## FRIDAY

BEFORE THE FIRST SUNDAY IN LENT.

GOSPEL.—*Matt.* v. 43-48; vi. 1-4.

*At that time ; Jesus said to his disciples.* You have heard that it hath been said, Thou shalt love thy neighbor, and hate thy enemy. But I say to you, Love your enemies, do good to them that hate you : and pray for them that persecute and calumniate you : that you may be the children of your Father who is heaven, who maketh his sun to rise upon the good and bad, and raineth upon the just and the unjust. For if you love them that love you, what reward shall you have ? do not even the publicans this ? And if you salute your brethren only, what do you do more ? do not also the heathens this ? Be you therefore perfect, as also your

heavenly Father is perfect. (Chap. vi.) Take heed that you do not your justice before men, to be seen by them : otherwise you shall not have a reward of your Father who is in heaven. Therefore when thou dost an alms deed, sound not a trumpet before thee, as the hypocrites do in the synagogues and in the streets, that they may be honored by men. Amen I say to you, they have received their reward. But when thou dost alms, let not thy left hand know what thy right hand doth. That thy alms may be in secret, and thy Father who seeth in secret, will repay thee.

## INSTRUCTION.

THIS gospel is taken from our blessed Saviour's divine sermon on the mount, wherein, after having declared, that he came not to destroy the law and the prophets, but to fulfil them, he shows to how much higher a degree of perfection he raises the Christian institute, above the law of Moses. The supreme excellence of the gospel appears no less wonderful in the extensive precepts of charity here delivered, than in the manner wherein Christ would have us bestow alms, and perform works of mercy to the poor ; "*Love your enemies, says he, and do good to them that hate you.*" However difficult *this command* may seem to our

corrupt nature, so prone to bear malice and seek revenge, yet it is *positive*, nor can any one be a disciple of Christ *without observing it* : it is not a counsel, but a precept, and one that carries with it the distinguishing characteristic of a true Christian : though it appears difficult to nature, yet by the help of divine grace it will become easy and pleasant. Christ requires nothing of us, but what we may perform by the assistance of his grace, and of which, not only he himself has set us an admirable example in his own person, but also in that of Joseph towards his envious brethren ; David towards Saul ; besides the examples of the apostles, of St. Stephen the protomartyr, and innumerable other saints. This is the sublime perfection of the Christian law ; for, if we love only our friends, or those who deserve our affection by their friendly offices, what do we more than the Jews or Heathens ? Therefore Christ says, “ *Be you perfect, as your heavenly Father is perfect ;* ” by loving your enemies, forgiving injuries, and doing good to those that hate you.

To this precept which must be observed by *all Christians*, because it is the command of their Divine Master, may also be added, the regard we ought to have to our own eternal interest, which essentially depends upon the

practise of this duty ; for Christ has positively said, that unless we forgive others their trespasses, our heavenly Father will not forgive ours, and further, that the same measure we give to others shall be returned to us again : for which reason we are taught to say in the Lord's Prayer, "*Forgive us our trespasses, as we forgive those who trespass against us.*" If then, when we say this prayer, we at the same time bear a hatred to any one, and refuse to pardon him his offenses, do we not in reality desire of God that he would not forgive us our sins ? Ah ! ought not this consideration alone, readily induce us sincerely to forgive all those who have offended us.

This is that Christian spirit of charity, which forbids us to be at enmity with others, and by which we ought so to live, as to prevent, as much as possible, others being at enmity with us. If therefore, there should be any, who either with or without a cause, are our enemies, it is our duty always to show a prompt desire of reconciliation, but more especially at this time of Lent, when Christians are supposed to go to the altar more frequently, and with more than ordinary devotion : but they must be guided by the spirit of sincere charity, if they desire to render themselves and their devotions acceptable to God.

Having established this branch of the precept of charity on a most noble and perfect basis, our blessed Saviour proceeds to give us instructions on another, that of giving alms according to our means, and showing mercy to the poor. He exhorts us, not to give alms with pomp or ostentation, lest the merit and reward of them should evaporate, and be lost in the smoke and pride of vanity: for although alms given with the sound of trumpet may make a great noise on earth yet they will never mount up to heaven; private charities are therefore more acceptable to God, and beneficial to ourselves: nor need we require any witness of what we do, since it is enough that God sees us, who can and will reward us: yet we are not to take these words of our blessed Saviour in the strict literal sense, for public charities or distributions of alms to the poor may be given, without any mixture of pride or vanity, with a pure and charitable intention, and then they not only edify our neighbor, but are also pleasing to God. St. Gregory gives us an excellent rule, to reconcile the seeming difference between giving alms in secret, and doing good works before men, that they may be edified, and glorify God. "What we do, let us so do it, as not to seek or desire human applause: let the good work be done publicly, but let the in-

tention be secret, that we may, by our good works, excite others to follow our example, and yet, by the purity of our intention, seek only to please God, desiring they should be known to him." It is thus we may preserve ourselves from pride and vanity, whilst we observe the injunctions laid upon us by our divine Master.

#### PRAAYER.

ADORABLE JESUS, grant me the grace to obey thy holy precepts. In obedience to thee, I will love my greatest enemies, and do good to those who hate me : for the love of thee, I sincerely forgive all who do me any manner of wrong, and for every injury, I desire thou wouldst bestow on them some special grace here, and a particular degree of glory hereafter.

My Lord and my God ! grant me, I beseech thee, purity of intention, that in all my actions I may seek nothing but thy honor and glory, desiring that my good works may be known to thee alone : preserve me from vanity and ostentation, that I may so effectually condemn the praises of men, as never to seek or covet their esteem. Ah, my God ! all their praises cannot make me better than what I really am in thy sight : let me choose to be little in the eyes of men, and great in thine, for in this alone does true greatness and virtue consist.



O, my soul ! what is the world but an empty nothing ? what then can we expect from it ! Shall we, to please it, and gain its vain applause, hazard the loss of God's favor and approbation ? May I never, O, my God, be guilty of such extravagant folly. Whatever I do, shall be done with a pure intention to please thee alone. Thy love and thy favor is all I seek : let the world despise, and every one slight me ; if I am but approved of by thee, it will be more than sufficient, and I shall be abundantly happy : this is the only felicity after which I aspire, and for this will I labor, by loving and serving thee, for thy sake alone, to the end of my life.

---

## SATURDAY

BEFORE THE FIRST SUNDAY IN LENT.

GOSPEL.—*Mark* vi. 47-56.

*At that time :* When it was late, the ship was in the midst of the sea, and himself alone on the land. And seeing them laboring in rowing (for the wind was against them) : and about the fourth watch of the night he cometh to them walking upon the sea, and he would have passed by them. But they seeing him walking upon the sea, thought it was an apparition, and they



cried out. For they all saw him, and were troubled. And immediately he spoke with them, and said to them: Have a good heart, it is I, fear ye not. And he went up to them into the ship, and the wind ceased. And they were far more astonished within themselves: for they understood not concerning the loaves: for their heart was blinded. And when they had passed over, they came into the land of Genesareth, and set to the shore. And when they were gone out of the ship, immediately they knew him; and running through that whole country, they began to carry about in beds those that were sick, where they heard he was. And whithersoever he entered, into towns, or into villages, or cities, they laid the sick in the streets, and besought him that they might touch but the hem of his garment: and as many as touched him were made whole.

#### INSTRUCTION.

There cannot be a more lively picture of the labor, and the continual disappointments of a worldly life, than what is here represented by the evangelist, of the apostles laboring against contrary winds, in the absence of their Divine Master. After Christ had, by an illustrious miracle, fed five thousand men with five barley loaves and two fishes, he obliged his disciples to

cross the water before him to Bethsaida, whilst he dismissed the multitude, and then retired to a mountain to pray. The disciples, in obedience to his orders, embarked ; but having advanced in the midst of the sea, and the winds being contrary, they could not bring the ship to the shore : they labored in vain till about the fourth watch of the night, Jesus came to their assistance, and entering into the ship, the wind ceased, and they soon arrived at the desired landing place.

This world is justly compared to a sea, over which all Christians, as disciples of Christ, are obliged to pass, in order to arrive at the haven of eternal beatitude ; but without his assistance, they find insuperable difficulties, and, unable to advance towards the desired port, remain every moment in danger of sinking. Such is the case with all those, who, though embarked in the ship of the CATHOLIC CHURCH, yet may be truly said to want the company of Jesus, by not living according to his spirit and the maxims of his gospel : whose thoughts and desires continually aspire after the possession of the riches, honors, and pleasures of this world : such can never hope to arrive at happiness, whilst the contrary winds raised by their inordinate affections, prevent them from making any advances towards the heavenly port : this will appear evi-

dent, when we consider the opposition that exists between the spirit of Christ, and the spirit of the world : we may indeed labor at the oar, by some external show of religion or form of piety ; but we shall never be able to advance, unless Jesus, by the spirit of humility, self-denial, contempt of this world, and a love of heavenly things, be at the helm.

Worldlings, alas ! are unwilling to believe that all their solicitude for the attainment of the joys of this life, is no better than rowing against the tide ; contrary to faith, as well as experience, they seek for happiness where it is not to be found ; the number of those who make an exterior profession of religion, without attending to the practise of the duties which it inculcates, is more considerable now than ever.

What then has the sincere Christian to do, but to beg the presence of Jesus that under his protection, and by his assistance, he may be enabled to weather the storm ? for he cannot expect to sail through the turbulent ocean of this life, without meeting contrary winds : from the case of the apostles, in this day's gospel, he may learn not only the difficulties and dangers of a worldly life ; but also, that even a life of virtue and piety itself, is not exempt from many severe trials. Christ ordered his apostles to go on board the ship, and to cross the water

without him, though he foresaw the difficulties and troubles they had to encounter, not only to convince them how necessary his presence was, and how little they could do without him, but also to put their faith and confidence to the trial : although he was corporally absent, yet he was present with them in spirit : they rowed and labored, but could not advance, the winds being contrary ; nevertheless he preserved them, and prevented the wind from oversetting their vessel : in this condition they remained several hours, when about the fourth watch of the night he appeared walking on the sea : affrighted at the sight, they supposed it to have been an apparition ; but he soon calmed their fears, and the moment he entered the ship, the storm ceased, and they landed in safety. O, admirable representation of the conduct which God occasionally observes towards his most faithful servants ! Sometimes he seems to withdraw himself from them, at least as to any sensible proof of his presence, and leaves them, as it were, to struggle against the contrary winds of the difficulties and obstacles they meet with, but which of themselves they are not able to overcome, though they labor ever so indefatigably, to convince them how little they can do of themselves, and how absolutely they must depend on his gracious assistance, who, though

he may absent himself from them for a time, will return again when they least expect him, and by his appearance calm their fears and apprehensions: in a moment he will command the winds to abate, and guide the vessel safe into the desired port.

This consideration must afford us great comfort amidst interior desolations and darkness of soul, and enable us to bear up against all opposition, either from the world or our own corrupt nature. The principal lesson therefore we are to learn from the gospel of this day, is to put our sole confidence in God, and not despond or think ourselves abandoned, when we have not a sensible perception of the presence of Christ. He incessantly beholds us, and knows the most proper time when to appear, and say: "*It is I: be not afraid.*" Wherefore we must, like the apostles, continue laboring at the oar, or, in other words, we must continue to do our best; until Christ comes to our assistance; but we must leave the time and manner of his visitation to himself: we may earnestly cry out:—*Lord save us. Come, Lord Jesus, come quickly;* but we must add, in thine own time, *Thy will, not mine, be done.*

## PRAYER.

O, SAVIOUR of my soul! behold me in the vast sea of this world directing my course towards the port of everlasting happiness. But alas! the winds are contrary, the sea is rough, and with all my labor and toil I cannot advance forward: how can it be otherwise, O, Lord, since thou art absent, and leavest me to myself? O, come and manifest thyself to me, show the power of thy grace, in quieting the storms raised by my unruly passion: calm the winds and bid them to cease, say to the sea: *Be still*. Thy powerful word can allay the most violent storm; wherefore, if thou appearest and dost enter my vessel, it will soon arrive at the wished-for haven: my whole confidence is placed in thee, I humbly resign myself to all the dispensations of thy blessed will: suffer me not to be lost in the hurry and tumult of worldly affairs, in the too ardent pursuit of the goods of this life: let me not be immoderately concerned about many things, since one thing only is necessary, that is, to love and serve thee.

This, O, my God! I consider as my only affair, to which all others shall be subservient: in loving thee, I shall be completely happy: but if I do not love thee, I shall be truly miserable. Thou commandest me to love thee:

give me then thy grace to do what thou commandest, and command what thou pleasest. Thou hast created my heart for thyself. O, may it never be at rest till it reposes in thee, who art the divine fountain of Love. Let then those sweet streams of affection flow upon my soul, that it may be wholly absorbed in the love of thee, my God.

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## MONDAY.

IN THE FIRST WEEK OF LENT.

GOSPEL.—*Matt.* xxv. 31-46.

*At that time ; Jesus said to his disciples :* When the Son of Man shall come in his majesty and all the angels with him, then shall he sit upon the seat of his majesty. And all nations shall be gathered together before him, and he shall separate them one from another as the shepherd separateth the sheep from the goats : and he shall set the sheep on his right hand, but the goats on his left. Then shall the kings say to them that shall be on his right hand : Come, ye blessed of my Father, possess the kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world. For I was hungry, and you gave me to eat : I was thirsty, and you gave me to



drink: I was a stranger, and you took me in: naked, and you covered me: sick, and you visited me: I was in prison, and you came to me. Then shall the just answer him, saying: Lord, when did we see thee hungry, and fed thee: thirsty, and gave thee drink? And when did we see thee a stranger, and took thee in: or naked, and covered thee? Or when did we see thee sick or in prison, and came to thee? And the king answering shall say to them: Amen I say to you, as long as you did it to one of these my least brethren, you did it to me. Then shall he say to them also that shall be on his left hand: Depart from me, you cursed, into everlasting fire which was prepared for the devil and his angels. For I was hungry, and you gave me not to eat; I was thirsty, and you gave me not to drink. I was a stranger, and you took me not in: naked, and you covered me not: sick, and in prison, and you did not visit me. Then shall they also answer him, saying: Lord, when did we see thee hungry, or thirsty, or a stranger, or naked, or sick, or in prison and did not minister to thee? Then he shall answer them, saying: Amen I say to you, as long as you did it not to one of these least neither did you it to me. And these shall go into everlasting punishment, but the just into life everlasting.



## INSTRUCTION.

OF all the truths of the Christian religion, none requires our serious consideration more than the last judgment, as a forgetfulness thereof, or a neglect to prepare for it, must be attended with the most fatal consequences. The church, in the gospel of to-day, states the account which Jesus Christ gives of the proceedings of the last day, together with the manner of his coming to judgment, and the different sentences he will pronounce upon the wicked and the righteous, that beholding its terrors, and the strict judgment we must then undergo, we may be excited to a speedy and sincere repentance for our past sins, and to the exercise of those works of mercy, which alone can inspire us with a just confidence to stand before our Saviour, when he shall come to judge all mankind according to their deserts ; let us then enter at present into those pious sentiments of the church, and entertain our thoughts with suitable reflections on the manner of our blessed Lord's coming to judgment, and of those great transactions wherein each individual of the posterity of Adam must bear his part.

The first coming of our blessed Saviour was in his *mercy*, with great humility and poverty, to save the world ; but his second coming will

be in his *justice*, with infinite glory and majesty, to judge and condemn it. He will then appear like himself, the Son of God, attended by all the powers of heaven, as so many ministers to execute his orders; then, on the dreadful trumpet's piercing the silent graves, upon the awful summons, *Rise, ye dead, and come to judgment*, all mankind shall appear before the throne of God, every one placed according to his merits, either on his right or left hand: the just on one side, and the wicked on the other: then will be brought forth that tremendous volume, wherein are recorded all our thoughts, words, and actions; and after undergoing a strict, and severe account, as to the manner in which we have lived, and died, we shall accordingly be either approved or condemned: the righteous shall then meet with a public approbation of their piety, and be invited by Jesus Christ to the participation of eternal happiness; whilst the wicked shall hear the terrible sentence of their own condemnation, and be doomed to suffer eternal misery in punishment of their crimes, and for not having exercised works of charity toward others.

Behold the order in which Christ will proceed to judgment: in the first place, he will address himself to the just, and invite them to take possession of the kingdom of heaven. O,

what an addition to the confusion of the wicked, when they shall behold those, whom they here tofore held in so much scorn and contempt, now exalted so far above them, called to the possession of eternal happiness, whilst they hear themselves condemned forever to the dreadful flames of hell: the terrible sentence, *Go, ye cursed into everlasting fire*, shall no sooner be pronounced, than the unfortunate wretches must sink into the bottomless pit, there to remain in torments forever, whilst the just shall ascend in joy, and triumph, to reign eternally with Christ, in the kingdom of heaven.

It may be useful to consider the causes assigned by the Judge, for his approbation of the just, and condemnation of the wicked. He does not say, *Come, ye blessed of my Father*, because ye have believed in me, and professed the Christian Religion ; no ; but because *I was hungry and you gave me to eat*, etc., and as you have done it to one of the least of these my brethren, you have done it to me. From whence it is evident that *faith alone* will not justify us, but that to faith must be added a *practical piety* : and that, by performing works of mercy and charity to the poor, we do them to Christ himself, who will thus reward us at the last day. In like manner Christ does not reproach the wicked with a want of faith, nor condemn them

for not believing his gospel, but rather with a want of charity, in not joining the practical part of religion to their belief: hence he tells them, that having refused mercy and charity to the poor, they refused it to him. Behold then, the sad cause of their condemnation: trusting to an empty faith, and an outward profession of religion, they neglected the discharge of its practical duties: for which reason, "*knowing their Master's will, and not having done it, they shall be beaten with many stripes,*" and suffer the direful effects of their impiety and folly.

That we may escape so dreadful a fate, let us now, whilst we have time, do good, according to the advice of the apostle, (*Gal. vi.*) and for this end, let us frequently consider the last day, and what appearance we shall then be able to make before our sovereign Judge. "*O, that we were wise and would consider:*" for though we may now hear or read of these things as if they were at a great distance, yet they will certainly one day arrive, and perhaps sooner than we imagine. But, alas! when the awful period comes, we shall find ourselves deeply concerned: the wicked will then earnestly wish they had repented, and will wish in vain for a little time: the use we ought to make of these reflections, is, to resolve to do penance for our sins, and exercise ourselves in such acts of charity, and

good works, as will secure us on that tremendous day, when our eternal lot will be finally decided, and when we shall be either rewarded or punished, according to our deeds in this world.

## PRAYER.

O, sovereign Judge of the world, before whom all mankind must one day appear! impress on my soul a wholesome fear of thy judgments. I tremble, O, Lord, when I reflect on the strict account I must one day give, and desire now to appeal from the bar of thy justice to the throne of thy mercy. I implore pardon for my past negligences, and crave the assistance of thy grace to amend my life. Thou hast called me to the knowledge of the true faith: O, let me then be ever careful to adorn it with good works, and mercy to the poor, according to my means. May I here show myself a good, and faithful servant, that when thou shalt come, and call me to account, I may deserve to be approved, and rewarded by thee. Let me have the account I must hereafter render, always before my eyes, that I may never grow negligent, or slothful in thy service, nor hazard my eternal happiness, by a neglect of my duty towards thee.

“Deliver me, O, Lord, from eternal death in that dreadful day, when the heavens and earth

shall be moved, when thou shalt come to judge the world by fire. I tremble and am sore afraid when the examination is to be, and thy wrath to come. When the heavens and earth shall be moved, and when thou shalt come to judge the world by fire. That day is a day of anger, of calamity, and of misery, a great day, and very bitter : when thou shalt come to judge the world by fire. Wo is me, O, Lord, because I have sinned exceedingly in my life. O, wretch, what shall I do? whither shall I fly, but to thee, my God? Have mercy on me, when thou comest at the latter day. Remember not my sins when thou shalt come to judge the world by fire. Have mercy on me, O, God, and save me."

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## TUESDAY.

IN THE FIRST WEEK OF LENT.

GOSPEL.—*Matt.* xxi. 10-17.

*At that time :* When he was come into Jerusalem, the whole city was moved, saying: Who is this? And the people said: This is Jesus the prophet, from Nazareth of Galilee. And Jesus went into the temple of God, and

cast out all them that sold and bought in the temple, and overthrew the tables of the money-changers, and the chairs of them that sold doves: and he saith to them: It is written, "My house shall be called the house of prayer; but you have made it a den of thieves." And there came to him the blind and the lame in the temple: and he healed them. And the chief priests and scribes seeing the wonderful things that he did, and the children crying in the temple, and saying: "Hosanna to the son of David," were moved with indignation, and said to him: Hearest thou what these say? And Jesus said to them: Yea, have you never read: "Out of the mouths of infants and of sucklings thou hast perfected praise?" And leaving them he went out of the city into Bethania, and remained there.

#### INSTRUCTION.

FROM the conduct of Jesus Christ, as related in this gospel, we may easily comprehend how offensive it is to God, to profane his temples by a want of respect, and reverence at public worship. Jesus, the most meek, and mild Jesus, who never expressed the least resentment for the injuries he received from the Jews, nor anger for their unjust calumnies against his sacred person and doctrine, enter-

ing the temple, and seeing it profaned by buyers and sellers, and those who had banks for changing money, moved with zeal and indignation drove them out, with the severe reproach, that they had *converted the temple of God*, his house of prayer, *into a den of thieves*. To be wanting in respect for, or to abuse the house of God, must therefore be considered as no trivial offense, since we here observe its perpetrators so severely treated by our blessed Lord, who on this occasion seems to lay aside that sweetness and mildness he had always manifested towards the greatest sinners.

Ah! would to God that the Jews were the only persons that could be found guilty of so criminal an abuse of the house of God. But, alas! are there not too many Christians who although they frequently hear and read this passage of the gospel, have yet the temerity to commit the same crime? Yes, they profane the churches of the living God, infinitely more august and venerable than the temple of Solomon. They turn those houses of prayer into dens of thieves by robbing God of that honor and respect which is due to him, and which he justly requires from all that present themselves before him at his public worship. Must not they, therefore, expect a more severe punishment than the Jews, since their profanations



are greater, and the places more sacred? The Jewish merchants who bought and sold in the temple, were guilty of two crimes which profaned the sanctity of the place. 1. They suffered their minds and thoughts to be occupied about other concerns than the adoration of God. 2. Their outward behavior was so very irreverent, as to excite the indignation of the Son of God. O, what a severe punishment, therefore, has he not in reserve, for those Christians who shall be convicted of the same offenses!

Will Christ not condemn the behavior of those, who seem designedly to contrive to come late to prayers, as if they considered every moment they were obliged to remain in the church an age, and their extreme hurry to depart the moment the service is over. The principal fault of which the ministers of God have reason to complain nowadays, is a want of that reverential awe and devotion which every one ought to have whilst he is in the house of God. It is not with words only, but with the pious affections of the mind, we are there to entertain ourselves, if we desire to be acceptable to God, or wish that he should hear our prayers; for, if we suffer our minds and thoughts to be so much occupied with other concerns, as to pay little or no attention to the

sacred mysteries at which we are present, we may indeed be said to draw near to God with our lips, but our hearts are far from him, an hypocrisy extremely odious in his sight, which he condemned in the Jews, and will more severely punish in Christians. Nor is he less offended, when our outward behavior is not conformable to the holiness of the place: we may gaze about, and divert ourselves at theaters, and places of public amusement; we may talk on business or politics in market places, or public assemblies: but as churches are places where we meet to implore the mercy of God, it is therefore requisite that we be not only excited to an *interior humility of heart*, but also to an *exterior reverence of the body*, and to such postures as best become penitent supplicants.

This is the true spirit of devotion, which must always accompany a Christian when he goes to the house of prayer. *His mind should be entirely intent upon the adoration and worship of God.* To apply ourselves wilfully to other thoughts, is but to insult God, and make his house a den of thieves, by robbing him of that honor and reverence, to which he is justly entitled: a crime for which its perpetrators will be punished with the utmost severity.

## PRAYER.

GREAT Sovereign of heaven and earth, in whose presence the cherubims cover their faces, and the powers of heaven tremble, inspire me with awe, when I appear before thee in thy house of prayer. O, may I never rob thee of thy due honor, by an irreverent, or unbecoming behavior. Let me never, by affronting thee in thine own house, provoke thy indignation, or cause thee to stop thine ears against my prayers. I acknowledge myself infinitely indebted to thy goodness for permitting me to appear in thy presence, to present my petitions at the throne of grace. O, grant me the spirit of unfeigned devotion, that I may address thee with reverence, and attention. Then shall my prayers ascend like incense in thy sight, and the lifting up of my hands and heart become an acceptable sacrifice to thee, O, God my Saviour!

How gracious art thou, O, sovereign Lord of heaven and earth! in permitting so vile a creature, so undeserving a wretch, to appear in thy presence. Dust and ashes as I am, I could never presume to lift up my eyes to thee, if in thy bountiful goodness thou didst not command us to approach thy holy sanctuary, promising to hear our prayers whenever we should

pray to thee as we ought. I will then enter into thy tabernacle, O, Lord! and adore thee in thy holy place. I will prostrate myself before thee, and adore thee truly present on thy sacred altars: with the utmost reverence and respect I will strike my breast, and say with the humble publican: *God be merciful to me a sinner*, that I may return from thy temple justified in thy sight, and obtain my humble petition, whereby I may be enabled to persevere to the end in thy love and service.

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## WEDNESDAY

IN THE FIRST WEEK OF LENT.

GOSPEL.—*Matt.* xii. 38—50.

*At that time*: Some of the Scribes and Pharisees answered him, saying: Master, we would see a sign from thee. Who answering said to them: An evil and adulterous generation seeketh for a sign; and a sign shall not be given it, but the sign of Jonas the prophet. For as Jonas was in the whale's belly three days and three nights: so shall the Son of Man be in the heart of the earth three days and three nights. The men of Nineve shall rise in judgment with this generation, and shall condemn it; be-

cause they did penance at the preaching of Jonas. And behold a greater than Jonas here. The queen of the south shall rise in judgment with this generation, and shall condemn it : because she came from the ends of the earth to hear the wisdom of Solomon, and behold a greater than Solomon here. When an unclean spirit is gone out of a man he walketh through dry places, seeking rest and findeth none. Then he saith : I will return into my house, from whence I came out. And coming he findeth it empty, swept and garnished. Then he goeth, and taketh with him seven other spirits more wicked than himself, and they enter in and dwell there : and the last state of that man is made worse than the first. So shall it be also to this wicked generation. As he was yet speaking to the multitudes, behold his mother and his brethren stood without, seeking to speak to him. And one said unto him, Behold thy mother and thy brethren stand without, seeking thee. But he answering him that told him, said : Who is my mother, and who are my brethren ? and stretching forth his hand towards his disciples, he said : Behold my mother and my brethren. For whosoever shall do the will of my Father that is in heaven, he is my brother, and sister, and mother.

## INSTRUCTION.

CHRIST, in this day's gospel, reproaches the Jews for their obstinacy and perverseness in refusing to hearken to his frequent exhortations to do penance for their sins, which met with no other return from them but a contempt of his person: "*Is not this the carpenter's son?*" and a derision of his doctrine! "*He is mad, and hath a devil, why hear ye him?*" Wherefore, he tells them that the men of Nineve, who had done penance at the preaching of Jonas, should rise up in judgment against them, since they refused to obey the voice of the Son of God their promised Messias, whose authority infinitely surpassed that of the prophet Jonas. But if the repentance and conversion of the Ninevites serve as a greater condemnation of the obstinacy and impenitence of the Jews, how much more severe must not the punishment of those Christians be, who refuse to hearken to the voice of Jesus, exhorting them, by the mouths of his ministers, to a speedy conversion. Jonas preached to the Ninevites, and granted them a respite of forty days; they immediately did penance, God's anger was appeased, and they escaped the destruction wherewith they were threatened. Happy the sinners who imitate them! Miserable those

who do not ! Their irretrievable misfortune is generally occasioned by a false persuasion *that they shall have not only time, but also grace, and a will to repent.* But here it is that the careless, and negligent sinner, often finds his hopes, or rather vain assurances, disappointed : the abuse he has made of the mercy of God, will prove the fatal cause why he cannot find time, or should he have time, he may not perhaps have the will ; or if he has, yet he may not have the grace to repent ; for as grace is a free gift of God, which he may without injustice refuse the sinner ; he, who has been in the habit of neglecting and slighting it when offered, has no reason to expect it should be granted to him whenever he pleases ; nor can he complain of injustice, if God should then refuse it.

God has made many gracious promises of pardon to sinners, to encourage them to repentance ; but he nowhere promises them time, which in its own nature, is the most uncertain of all things. Who can assure himself of life for a day, or even for an hour ? Our blessed Saviour, therefore, exhorts us to a speedy, as well as a sincere, repentance. He bids us watch : and why ? because we know neither the day nor the hour. However young, strong, or healthy we may be, yet we know not whether to-morrow, this day, or even this very hour, may not put



an end to our lives, and still we defer our repentance for months and years. Good God, what rashness, what folly!

Nor is it less chimerical to flatter ourselves, that we can have a will to repent when we please. If the will of man be in its own nature weak, the will of a sinner is still more so; but that of an habitual sinner is weakness in the extreme: with such a one, I would thus argue: you say you will repent and be converted; not at present, but at some future time: but will not the same obstacles which prevent you *now*, prevent you *then* also? If your unruly passions, inordinate desires, and vicious habits are at present obstacles to your conversion, the longer you continue in them, the stronger they will grow, and you will be less able, as well as less willing, to quit them. A passion in its infancy may be easily stifled, but when grown up to maturity, it becomes ungovernable. A habit lately contracted, like a slender cord, may be easily broken, but when of many years standing, it becomes stronger than an iron chain, beyond our strength to break. Be yourself then the judge, O, rash and inconsiderate sinner, how you shall be able to repent some years *hence*, if you refuse to be converted *now*.

You will say, perhaps, that although it be difficult, yet you may do it by the aid of God's



grace. Granted : But although he has promised his grace to all men, that none should despair, yet he has never engaged himself to grant it to those who wilfully abuse and slight it. Although he has made many consoling promises to *penitent* sinners, to excite them to a confidence in his mercy, yet he has also thundered out as many severe threats and terrible menaces against the *obstinate*, who refuse to hearken to him when he invites them to repentance. The most hardened sinner, therefore, ought to tremble at the consideration of his extreme rashness and unreasonable folly, in flattering himself with the hope of obtaining grace whenever he pleases. Christ tells the Jews that they should seek him, but should not find him ; "*and that they should die in their sins.*" That this is not a bare threat, but frequently followed by real and terrible effects, we may learn from the sad examples of Cain, Pharaoh, Antiochus, etc., etc., who sought, but sought in vain, for pardon, because they had abused the grace of God by their criminal negligence and obstinacy. It must be also observed, that the grace of conversion in habitual sinners is a special, and an extraordinary favor. How then can a sinner, who neglects the ordinary graces of God, expect to be favored with extraordinary favors ? Alas ! he cannot. To depend upon

them, therefore, is a rash and unwarrantable presumption in such persons.

These truths, O, Christians! deserve our most serious consideration; and the use we should make of them is, to close immediately with the gracious offers of Almighty God, and return to him by a sincere and speedy conversion: let us then accept the grace he offers at this holy time; by so doing, we shall render ourselves secure, and escape that dreadful judgment and condemnation which must otherwise fall to our lot.

#### PRAYER.

AH, my God! make me sensible of the misfortunes to which I expose myself, by deferring my conversion. Deliver me, in thy great mercy, from so egregious a rashness. Suffer me no longer to abuse thy goodness, nor trifle with my eternal salvation. No, Lord, from this moment I am resolved to begin; and, O, may it be the change of the right hand of the most High! I here humble myself in thy presence, and sincerely acknowledge my past sins, for which I implore thy mercy and pardon. I am sorry from the bottom of my heart, for having so often, and so long, withstood thy gracious inspirations. I now sincerely promise amendment. From this moment I will begin to serve

thee with the utmost fidelity, and to love thee only, always, and above all other things. For who, O, my God ! can be so worthy of love as thee, who art the inexhaustible source of happiness, both in this world and the next ! When I reflect on thy infinite bounty and goodness towards me, I am overwhelmed with confusion at the sight of my base ingratitude. Dearest Lord ! in addition to all thy other favors, grant that I may be so truly sensible of thy mercy, and patience in my regard, as never more to abuse it. O ! may the consideration of thy goodness and bounty, effect such a change in my heart, that from this moment I may persevere in thy service, with a most pure and ardent love. O, may I now begin truly to love and serve thee, for alas ! what I have hitherto done is nothing.

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## THURSDAY

IN THE FIRST WEEK OF LENT.

GOSPEL.—*Matt.* xv. 21-28.

*At that time :* Jesus went from thence, and departed into the coasts of Tyre and Sidon. And behold a woman of Canaan who came out of those coasts, crying out, said to him : Have mercy on me, O, Lord, thou Son of David :

my daughter is grievously troubled by a devil. Who answered her not a word. And his disciples came and besought him, saying: Send her away, for she crieth after us: and he answering, said: I was not sent but to the sheep that are lost of the house of Israel. But she came and adored him, saying: Lord, help me. Who answering said: It is not good to take the bread of the children, and to cast it to the dogs. But she said, Yea, Lord; for the whelps also eat of the crumbs that fall from the table of their masters. Then Jesus answering, said to her: O, woman, great is thy faith: be it done to thee as thou wilt: and her daughter was cured from that hour.

#### INSTRUCTION.

FROM the example of the Canaanite woman who with so much humility and perseverance besought our Saviour to heal her daughter we may learn *how* to address ourselves to God when we stand in need of his assistance. She is a proof of what the apostle says, that *with God there is no exception of persons*, for she was not one of the people of God, but a Canaanite and a Pagan. Christ at first seems to reject her, and regards not her cries: for when the apostles interceded in her behalf, he replied: That he was only sent to the Jews,

the lost sheep of the house of Israel. The pious suppliant not discouraged at this refusal, approaching, adored him ; and by her humility, and perseverance, merited the great eulogium : *O, woman ! great is thy faith ;* together with the grant of her request : *Be it done unto thee as thou desirest :* and her daughter was immediately cured. Ah ! how opposite is this stranger's manner of prayer from ours, and how contrary the success wherewith it is attended ? She asks, and obtains ; we ask, and receive not, because as the apostle observes, *we ask amiss.* Her request for the deliverance of her daughter from the devil, was a *lawful petition*, accompanied by a *strong faith*, and an *humble confidence*. Behold here two excellent lessons, whereby we may learn how to pray, so as to be heard ; *first*, in all our prayers to demand those things which are lawful and good ; and *secondly*, to demand them in such a manner as to induce God to grant our request.

*First*, therefore, we must in all our prayers ask for those things which are in themselves good and lawful : petitions such as these, God has promised to hear ; the holy scriptures, in many instances, show their power and efficacy ; and if our prayers do not meet with the same success, the reason is, because we do not ask as we ought ; our inclinations, and desires, are

confined by a narrow view of the things of this world ; which appear to be the object, and end of all our wishes : some ask what seems good to themselves, but what is not so in the sight of God ; such as riches and honors which generally prove occasions of offending him ; and if he refuse to grant such requests, it is with the merciful intent to preserve us from danger ; perhaps it may be said by some : “ I ask nothing but what is lawful, as this Canaanite woman did, to be freed from a violent pain or illness ; I am poor, I demand some assistance.” These demands, though good and reasonable in themselves, may not perhaps be so in your particular case. God sees that sickness and poverty will best answer the designs of his providence in your regard, and, therefore, he does not grant your request. We have an admirable model of prayer in that which our blessed Saviour has taught us. First let us pray that the name of God may be glorified, that we may partake of his heavenly kingdom, that his divine will may be done ; and then we may securely ask for our daily bread : if engaged in a suit of law, if sick, or in narrow circumstances, let us first pray, that the will of God may be done in all things ; and then we may beg for success in our suit, for the recovery of our health, and for the relief of our necessities. This is what Christ exhorts

us to do, saying: "*Seek ye, therefore, first the kingdom of God and his justice and all these things shall be added unto you.*" This is the first lesson on prayer, which we learn from the woman of Canaan.

The *second* is to address our petitions in such a manner as that God may grant them. The poor woman requested our blessed Lord to deliver her daughter from the power of the devil; she made this prayer with profound humility, strong confidence, and patient perseverance, three essential qualities of prayer. *Humility* is absolutely necessary, for, *God resisteth the proud but giveth grace to the humble,*" and it is the prayer of the humble only that penetrates the clouds. If with the Canaanite woman, we humbly acknowledge our unworthiness, and with the penitent publican, we smite our breasts and say, *Lord be merciful to me a sinner*, then will God hear our prayers, and grant our petition.

Another condition of prayer is, to pray with *faith and confidence*. We must believe that God is willing, and able to grant our requests; for if we express any diffidence in his power and goodness we insult him, and prevent him from hearing us: yet alas! so little is the faith, and confidence, we place in God, that he is frequently the last to whom we have recourse



in any necessity ; and then only when every other aid has failed ; whereas, we should apply to him in the first instance. Had the woman in the gospel shown any diffidence in our blessed Saviour, he would neither have commended her faith, nor granted her request : to be heard then, as she was, we must pray with *confidence*, lest we should prevent the divine bounty from granting our petitions.

The *third* condition is *perseverance*, if we do not immediately perceive the effects of our prayers in obtaining what we ask, we must not therefore desist from praying. God seems to deny at first, what he will grant us at last, if we persevere in prayer. Hence our blessed Saviour tells us that we ought *always to pray, and not to faint*. Thus this poor woman, though at first rejected by our Saviour, even after the apostles had interceded in her behalf, was not discouraged, but continuing her cries, obtained her desires, and was dismissed with these consoling words : “ *Be it done unto thee as thou desirest.*” In like manner shall we obtain our request, if we persevere in prayer, and present our petitions with humble submission to God’s holy will. But we must also leave the time as well as the manner to God, and wait with patience till it shall please him to grant what we desire. If we solicit a person in



power for his assistance, we do not take the first refusal; we renew our request, and if we obtain a promise are content to wait his leisure, and after all, may be, and often are, disappointed: and shall we not be content to wait God's time, who we know will never disappoint, or deceive us? If he delays for some time to grant our petition, it is only to put our faith and patience to a trial, the more amply to reward those virtues: we shall have no reason to repent of our expectation: for, if we continue to seek, we shall find; and if we continue to knock, heaven's gates will be assuredly open to us: let us then conclude these reflections with the words of St. Bernard: "If our prayers are made with faith, humility, and fervor, they will certainly ascend to heaven, nor can they return from thence empty or in vain."

## PRAYER.

ADORABLE SAVIOUR! who dost graciously invite us to ask everything in thy name, with a promise that we shall be heard, teach me to ask for what I ought, as I ought: enable me to understand those things which I ask of thy heavenly Father: instruct me how I am to ask them: grant me that faith, humility, and perseverance, which may make my prayers ac-

ceptable in thy sight, that praying as I should upon earth, I may praise thee in heaven for eternity. O how great is thy goodness, merciful Redeemer of mankind ! who in condescension to our weakness, hast given us a most excellent, and perfect form of prayer ; and for our encouragement hast assured us, that when we pray we shall be heard. Hear then, my prayers, O Lord ! and grant that I may be sensible of thy goodness towards me, and my obligations to thee. Grant that being convinced of my own weakness, I may place my entire dependence on thee. To thee may I have recourse in all my necessities and from thy bounty hope to obtain a supply of all my wants, to the honor and glory of thy holy name.

I perceive, O, dearest Lord ! the great necessity I have of thy grace, as without its aid I can do nothing. I therefore humbly beseech thee, to help my weakness, and strengthen my good resolutions of loving and serving thee. Behold me, dear Saviour of my soul ! full of misery, weakness, and corruption, I have recourse to thee alone, for thou only canst help, and assist me. To thee do I humbly lay open all my miseries, not to inform thee, to whom the secrets of all hearts are open, and from whom nothing is hid ; but to excite thy compassion, and obtain from thy love and bounty,

a supply of my wants. O, inexhaustible treasure of goodness and love ! open the rich storehouse of thy mercy, and communicate thy graces to my soul ; fill my empty heart with an ardent love of thee ; unite me so intimately to thyself, that nothing being able to separate me from thee, I may forever live in thee, and thou in me. Amen.

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## FRIDAY

IN THE FIRST WEEK OF LENT.

GOSPEL.—*John* v. 1-15.

*At that time :* There was a festival of the Jews, and Jesus went up to Jerusalem. Now there is at Jerusalem a pond, called Probatika, which in Hebrew is named Bethsaida, having five porches. In these lay a great multitude of sick, of blind, of lame, and of withered, waiting for the moving of the water. And the angel of the Lord descended at certain times into the pond ; and the water was moved. And he that went down first into the pond after the motion of the water, was made whole of whatsoever infirmity he lay under. And there was a certain man there, that had been eight and thirty years under his infirmity. Him when Jesus had seen lying, and knew that

he had been now a long time, he saith to him : Wilt thou be made whole ? The infirm man answered him : Sir, I have no man, when the water is troubled, to put me into the pond. For whilst I am coming, another goeth down before me. Jesus saith to him : Arise, take up thy bed, and walk. And immediately the man was made whole : and he took up his bed and walked. And it was the Sabbath that day. The Jews therefore said to him that was cured : It is the Sabbath, it is not lawful for thee to take up thy bed. He answered them : He that made me whole, he said to me : Take up thy bed, and walk. They asked him therefore : Who is that man that said to thee : Take up thy bed, and walk ? But he that was healed, knew not who it was. For Jesus went aside from the multitude standing in the place. Afterwards Jesus findeth him in the temple, and saith to him : Behold thou art made whole ; sin no more, lest some worse thing happen to thee. The man went his way, and told the Jews that it was Jesus that had made him whole.

#### INSTRUCTION.

THE gospel of this day affords us *three* salutary considerations. *First*, the sad state of sinners, represented by the poor man who

had labored eight and thirty years under a distemper. *Secondly*, the great mercy of God, exemplified in his cure. *Thirdly*, a profitable caution for sinners reconciled to God, in those words of Christ to the sick man: "*Behold thou art cured: sin no more, lest something worse befall thee.*" The condition of this poor man was doubtless deplorable. He had labored thirty-eight years under an infirmity, which rendered him unable to help himself, not having any one to assist him to get first into the water, to be cured at the pool of Bethsaida. He was a lively figure of the unhappy condition of those who live in an habitual state of sin, which depriving them of the grace of God, renders them incapable to help themselves. O, sad effects of sin! which reduces a sinner to such spiritual weakness, that his will is ever averse to do any good: he is incapable of seeing, or comprehending the danger of his situation: whilst he remains in this state, he is like the man in the gospel, unable to help himself, and waits in vain for the assistance of others: the things of this world, to which sinners are so violently attached, will neither comfort nor heal their spiritual maladies: it is only from the grace of God, which he is always willing to bestow upon those who sincerely desire it, that they can expect a cure, and though the

state of an habitual sinner be truly lamentable, he must not despair. God has mercy in store for the greatest of sinners. He addresses them in the words of Christ to the sick man : *Will you be made whole ?* And provided they be sincerely willing, he will further say : *Arise, take up thy bed, and walk.*

The consideration of the infinite mercy of God towards sinners, ought to be their greatest consolation : they may at all times find in him a powerful physician, who is both able and willing to cure them : and for the encouragement of even the greatest offenders, he thus addresses them by the mouth of his prophets : *“ As I live, I desire not the death of the wicked, but that the wicked turn from his ways and live.” “ Turn to me, O, House of Israel, and though your sins be as scarlet, they shall be made white as snow ; and though they are red as vermilion, they shall be white as wool.”* No assurance can be more certain, than that God will show mercy to all who are truly penitent ; and no time can be more proper for their conversion, than the present penitential season, wherein we are called upon by the Church, to seek a reconciliation with him, by fasting, prayer, and the amendment of our lives. He thus exhorts us by his prophet : *Convert yourselves from your evil ways.* Ah ! what

can be more tender or endearing? Must not that sinner, then, be obstinately bent on his own destruction who refuses to answer so gracious a call? Not so, the sick man in the gospel, when our Saviour asked him if he desired to be made whole, he answered in the affirmative, but said he had no one to help him. Christ immediately cured him, and bid him take up his bed and walk. If sinners would imitate this paralytic, let them be sensible of their melancholy situation, show a sincere willingness to be delivered from it, and do as their spiritual physician orders them. They would then find a certain cure, and be restored to health by recovering the grace and favor of God; but they must also never forget the advice which our blessed Lord gave to this man, when he found him afterwards in the temple: *Sin no more, lest a worse thing befall thee.*

What ingratitude can be more base, than for a person who, after having forfeited his life and estate for treason, and having the one spared, and the other restored to him, falls again into his former treason and rebellion? Does not such a traitor deserve to feel the utmost rigor of the law? Hence we may learn, what a heinous offense it is, and how severe a punishment it deserves, wilfully to relapse into those

sins of which we have obtained pardon from God. By a wilful relapse, the sinner violates the sanctity of the sacrament of penance, wherein he solemnly promised never more to offend God, to whose mercy he is so much indebted, for having obtained the remission of his sins; what therefore can be a greater crime than again to rise up in spiritual rebellion against him; do not such sinners deserve the severest punishment? ought he not smart under the rod of God's justice, who thus ungratefully abuses his mercy? For as St. Chrysostom observes, "He is unworthy of mercy, who after pardon, sins again, he is unworthy of health, who being cured makes himself sick again; neither does he deserve to be cleansed, who after grace defiles himself again." As there is no evil then against which we ought to be more on our guard, than that of relapsing into sin after having obtained pardon, so there is nothing of which we ought to be more careful, than to preserve ourselves in the grace and favor of God, to which we are restored by repentance: let us then ever remember the admonition of our Saviour: *Sin no more, lest something worse befall thee.*



## PRAYER.

To thee I have recourse, O, Jesus ! the true and only physician of my soul. I am sick, dear Lord, and have long been troubled with many infirmities : I labor under many evil habits, and have no one to help me : look upon me with an eye of pity, and say to me, as thou didst to the sick man : "*Rise, take up thy bed, and walk.*" O, breathe those comforting words to my soul : "*Be of good courage, thy sins are forgiven thee.*" Then will I rise, and walk in the paths of thy commandments, and with all possible gratitude and acknowledgment, praise thy holy name ; but when thou hast thus made me whole, graciously preserve and keep me in health ; never permit me to relapse into sin, nor frustrate thy goodness by my ingratitude. Alas ! my dear Lord, how ought I be covered with shame and confusion, when I consider how often thou hast mercifully pardoned my sins, and yet, alas ! I have relapsed into those very sins again ! O, God ! my soul is troubled, and overwhelmed with fear and apprehensions ; but as thou art an inexhaustible source of mercy and goodness, I have recourse to thee. Pardon me O, merciful Saviour ! and I purpose by thy grace, to be more faithful to thee hereafter. Thou hast thyself inspired me with this desire ; perfect then,

dear Lord, what thou hast begun in me. O, thou health of my soul! thou sovereign remedy of all my evils! To whom should I have recourse but thee, or from whom should I seek for help but from thee? 'Tis thou alone that canst restore the sick to health, and raise the dead to life. O, may I experience this thy power, and goodness: speak the word, O, Lord! and my soul shall be healed and O, may thy bounty preserve that health to which thou hast restored me, that I may praise and glorify thy name forever and ever.

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## SATURDAY

IN THE FIRST WEEK OF LENT.

GOSPEL.—*Matt.* xvii. 1-9.

*At that time:* Jesus taketh unto him Peter and James, and John his brother, and bringeth them up into a high mountain apart: and he was transfigured before them. And his face did shine as the sun: and his garments became white as snow. And behold there appeared to them Moses and Elias talking with them. Then Peter answering, said to Jesus: Lord, it is good for us to be here: if thou wilt, let us make here three tabernacles, one for thee, and

one for Moses, and one for Elias. And as he was yet speaking, behold a bright cloud overshadowed them. And lo a voice out of the cloud, saying: This is my beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased: hear ye him. And the disciples hearing, fell upon their face, and were very much afraid. And Jesus came and touched them: and said to them: Arise, and fear not. And they, lifting up their eyes, saw no one, but only Jesus. And as they came down from the mountain, Jesus charged them, saying: Tell the vision to no man, till the Son of Man shall be risen from the dead.

#### INSTRUCTION.

OUR blessed Lord, having entertained his disciples with a discourse concerning his passion, and the cruel sufferings he was to endure: St. Peter in a transport of love for his divine Master, said to him: "*Lord, far be it from thee: this shall not happen to thee.*" But the Son of God, instead of approving, gave the prince of the apostles a severe reprimand, and informed his disciples that he alone was not to suffer, but that they, and all who desire to be his disciples, must also after his example, suffer and carry their cross: that in recompense for their sufferings, they should partake of his

glory when he came to judge the world, and render to every one according to his works: but as the glory which he promised, was a future happiness unknown to them, he would by way of encouragement give them a glimpse thereof, that they might not doubt the truth of what he said to them: hence he took SS. Peter, James, and John, up to a high mountain, and was there transfigured before them. In the mystery of Christ's transfiguration, we may consider that Moses and Elias talked with our Saviour about his passion, and what he was to suffer at Jerusalem. By which we are to understand, that it is by suffering with Christ we must hope to arrive at his glory. As the apostle St. Paul says: "*If we suffer with him, we shall be glorified with him.*" Calvary is the road to Thabor and the glories of Thabor will recompense the sufferings of Mount Calvary.

Christ speaking of himself, says, "*that it behooved him to suffer, and so to enter into his glories.*" If it behooved him, who is our head, how much more us, who are his members. We all desire to share in the glory of heaven, but it is an illusion to expect to arrive thereat, and not walk in the way that leads thereto: the cross is the only way to heaven: how can we then flatter ourselves with the hope of getting thither, if we turn out of our way? As

*sons of God, and the brethren of Jesus Christ*, we may hope for heaven ; but then we must be content to suffer with Jesus. *As members of the Catholic Church*, we may hope for heaven ; but the cross and sufferings are the portion here, of which we must be partakers. *If as penitents* we hope to gain heaven, we must suffer here, to make some atonement for our sins. If, in a word, *we desire to share in the glory of Thabor, we must first bear a part in the sufferings of Calvary.* A prospect of the glories of the former, will animate and enable us to support with joy, and patience, the sufferings of the latter.

There are no punishments in this world, however severe, that will not appear light and easy to Christians who seriously reflect on the eternal rewards that await them in the next. This made St. Paul exclaim, "*that the sufferings of this world, are not worthy to be compared with the future glory which shall be revealed in us.*" Ah, what proportion can there be, between the short misery of a few years, and the never-ending glories of heaven? Let us take the balance of eternity into our hands, and put into one scale all the wretchedness of this life, pain, grief, shame, poverty, disgrace and persecution, and into the other, eternity, heaven, God himself ; and with astonishment behold the dispro-

portion! Holy Job, in all his afflictions, made use of this consideration, and from his dunghill, in the midst of his pains, cried out with joy : *I shall see my God ; my eyes shall behold him ; this hope is laid up in my bosom.* Thus a good Christian who beholds with the eye of faith, all the glories of heaven, will say, though I have lost my temporal goods, I shall one day behold, and possess my God. Though I am now calumniated, persecuted, and in disgrace, and my body sorely afflicted by pain and sickness, yet this same body shall rise again to enjoy God, and partake of the glory of heaven : this consideration will comfort us in all our troubles, when once our hearts become enamored with a desire of the other world, and we place before our eyes its incomparable glories and happiness, we shall regard those sufferings, which are the necessary means to obtain it, as mere trifles. We shall rather say with St. Peter, "*Lord ! it is good for us to be here,*" and think ourselves happy in being in the highroad to our heavenly country, where our tears will be wiped away ; our sorrow turned into joy, and the momentary troubles of this world be terminated in an eternal possession of never-ending bliss.

## PRAYER.

ADORABLE Jesus! O, suffering Redeemer of mankind! I earnestly desire to partake of thy glories, and am content to share in thy sufferings. I will carry my cross after thee; I will be crucified to the world, and the world shall be crucified to me. I desire, dear Jesus, to ascend with thee up to mount Thabor, but I will first follow thee to mount Calvary. There I will die to myself, and to the world: there will I offer myself a sacrifice on the altar of the cross; since it was love, dear Lord, that has nailed thee to that sacred wood, so it is love shall fix me thereon. O, that I could there breathe out my soul in the purest affections of love, and gratitude towards thee, who has loved me to such an excess as to die upon the cross for my sake! Teach me to know, and understand this important truth, that to be happy with thee, I must suffer with thee: and that it is only by the way of the cross, that I can obtain a crown of glory.

Shall I then murmur at any cross or affliction thou shalt please to send me! No, my dearest Jesus! I will willingly take up my cross and follow thee: the cross is thy royal standard, around which thou dost gather all thy faithful soldiers: and how can I pretend to be

incorporated among them, if I fly from it? The cross, then, shall henceforth be my delight. I will not only be content, but will rejoice to suffer for, and with thee, here, that I may be happy with thee hereafter: my pains having been sanctified by thy holy cross, my afflictions will be rendered sweet and easy by reflecting on thy sufferings, my Lord and Master! I am thy disciple, and thy servant: I desire not to be esteemed more than thou wast: it shall be my glory and my happiness to suffer with thee.

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## MONDAY

### IN THE SECOND WEEK OF LENT.

GOSPEL.—*John viii. 21.-29.*

*At that time ; Jesus said to the multitude of the Jews : I go and you shall seek me, and you shall die in your sin. Whither I go, you cannot come. The Jews therefore said : Will he kill himself, because he said : Whither I go, you cannot come? And he said to them : You are from beneath, I am from above. You are of this world, I am not of this world. Therefore I said to you, that you shall die in your sins. For if you believe not that I am he, you*



shall die in your sins. They said therefore to him: Who art thou? Jesus said to them: The beginning, who also speak unto you. Many things I have to speak, and to judge of you. But he that sent me is true: and the things I have heard of him, the same I speak in the world. And they understood not that he called God his father. Jesus therefore said to them: When you shall have lifted up the Son of Man, then shall you know that I am he, and that I do nothing of myself, but as the Father has taught me, these things I speak. And he that sent me is with me, and he had not left me alone: for I do always the things that please him.

## INSTRUCTION.

THE awful threat which the Saviour of the world here pronounces against the Jews, is not less terrible to many Christians. Not to seek after God, is a great misfortune; but to seek after him, and not to find him, is infinitely greater. *You shall seek me*, says he, *and you shall die in your sins*. A plain indication of the lamentable condition of an obstinate sinner, who, at the hour of death, seeks God, but cannot find him. Let us examine why a sinner does not find God, whom he then seeks. It will be a salutary inquiry, as it may excite

us to adopt the proper means to prevent our being involved in the same terrible calamity. The obstinate sinner has all his lifetime resisted the repeated invitations and inspirations of the Almighty: he has been deaf to the frequent solicitations of his ministers, and refused to repent; but when his last sickness tells him he is near his end, with what horror and confusion does he not then look back upon his past sinful life, when the sight of the many and enormous crimes of which he has been guilty, brings him almost into despair: for he has so long abused the grace of God, that he finds little reason to hope in his mercy: he is now sensible of the disorders of his sinful career, and makes just reflections on things, but alas! they come too late. What grief and vexation does he not then feel for not doing what he might have easily done before: how much does he regret and condemn his procrastinating folly: in this his extreme distress all that he ever heard concerning death, judgment, heaven, and hell, come fresh into his mind, to afflict and torment him in this deplorable state. A priest is sent for to console him: but, alas! what comfort can the sight of a priest be to one, who has all his life slighted the sacred order, condemned their pious admonitions, nay, made a jest of the serious

truths of religion? Can the sight of a crucifix, or the passion of Christ, afford consolation to one who never lived like a disciple of the crucified Jesus? Ah! it were well, if the dying sinner could make a right use of the few moments he has left; but, alas! his anguish of mind and body, together with the regret that he has to quit this world and its enjoyments, prevent him from making a proper use of them. At length, the sinner quits this life in a manner truly unhappy, because by death he enters upon a miserable eternity; for although *he seeks God, yet he does not find him, and thus he dies in his sins.*

This terrible calamity is entirely owing to the sinner himself; because he would not seek God, when he might be found, nor hearken to him when called to repentance, and amendment of life. God has frequently invited him by the ministers of his word; often assisted him by the secret inspirations of his grace; and afforded him time and opportunity: but, alas! he would neither embrace the one, nor hearken to the other: he wilfully persisted in the ways of sin, and would not deny himself unlawful pleasures; he gave himself up to the world, and its criminal customs; he paid no regard to the self-denying principles of the gospel; and thus having, under the name of a Christian,

lived like a heathen, he is deprived of all comfort in death ; for, though he then seemingly seeks after God, how can it be expected he should find him, since God himself has declared that he will not be mocked ? Those, then, who refuse to hearken to his voice, when he calls upon them, will cry out in vain, when they knock and say : *Lord, Lord, open to us :* for to such he will answer, *I know you not, depart from me, you workers of iniquity.* O, sad conclusion of a worldly and sinful life ! To avoid so dreadful a catastrophe, let us now, whilst we enjoy health and life,—now, whilst we have time and opportunity, serve God, keep his commandments, and make his gospel the rule of our conduct. This will comfort us upon our death bed, and help us to depart out of this world with joy and satisfaction : then shall we find God ; when we call upon him, he will hear us, then will he answer : *Well done, good and faithful servant, enter into the joy of the Lord.*

#### PRAYER.

O, MY God ! is there anything in this world for the purchase of which I can be content to suffer so much horror and confusion at my last hour ? No, certainly not. Can I then be so mad as not to seek thee now, whilst thou mayest be found ? Shall I defer my search after

thee, till my last moments, and thus run the hazard of not finding thee, and of dying in my sins? O, dearest Lord! suffer me not to indulge delusions so dangerous, nor to fall into so sad a calamity: let me not die the death of a sinner, but receive me into thy protection at my last hour. Imprint, O, my God! this serious truth deep upon my heart, that to die happily, I must love and serve thee faithfully. *O, may my soul die the death of the just and may my last end be like unto theirs.*

Whenever, O, Lord, it shall please thee to take me from hence, may thy grace enable me to die the death of the just: may it be my daily endeavor to prepare myself to meet thee at my last hour, that I may breathe out my soul in peace, and quietly resign it into thy hands: to attain this, I am resolved to prepare myself whilst thou affordest me time and opportunity. I will endeavor to live the life of the just, that I may hope my last end may be like unto theirs. O, comforting thought, which takes away all fear of death, blunts its sting, and removes all its terrors. What can we have to fear, O, my soul! at the end of a well-spent life? What may I not hope for from thy goodness, O, my God? All that thou thyself canst give, with whom I shall then be eternally happy.

## TUESDAY.

## IN THE SECOND WEEK OF LENT.

GOSPEL.—*Matt. xxiii. 1-12.*

*At that time :* Jesus spoke to the multitudes and to his disciples, saying: the Scribes and the Pharisees have sitten on the chair of Moses. All things therefore whatsoever they shall say to you, observe and do: but according to their works do ye not: for they say, and do not. For they bind heavy and insupportable burdens: and lay them on men's shoulders: but with a finger of their own they will not move them. And all their works they do to be seen of men. For they make their phylacteries broad and enlarge their fringes. And they love the first places at feasts, and the first chairs in the synagogues, and salutations in the market-place, and to be called by men Rabbi. But be not you called Rabbi. For one is your master, and all you are brethren. And call none your father upon earth: for one is your father, who is in heaven. Neither be ye called masters: for one is your master, Christ. He that is the greatest among you shall be your servant.

And whosoever shall exalt himself, shall be humbled: and he that shall humble himself, shall be exalted.

#### INSTRUCTION.

ALTHOUGH the Scribes and Pharisees were guilty of pride and hypocrisy, sins which our blessed Saviour severely condemns in this day's gospel, nevertheless, to do honor to their character as legal interpreters of the Jewish law, he tells his disciples, and the Jews, that as they sat in the chair of Moses, they were therefore obliged to hear, and follow their instructions; but he did not pretend to justify them, because they had not practised what they had taught to others. Christ does not condemn them for interpreting the law in a just, though strict sense, but he blames them for not practising what they taught; and therefore, he tells the Jews to observe, and do all that they should say to them according to the law, but not to imitate their practise, because they said, and did not.

From what our blessed Lord here says of the Scribes and Pharisees, Christians may learn their duty to their pastors, the ministers of the word of God; and pastors may understand what they owe to the people, or flock commit-

ted to their care: The people must look upon the ministers of God as his deputies, speaking in his name, and by his authority. *Sent by a legal mission and ordination*, they are the ambassadors of God, of whom Christ says: "*He that heareth you, heareth me; and he that despiseth you, despiseth me.*" They are to be attended to with respect, and attention: the instructions they deliver must be complied with, without criticising the life or actions of the preacher, or examining whether he practises what he teaches: we must suppose that he practises what he preaches to others: If it should appear that he does not, his omission will be no excuse for us, nor is he therefore to be despised; it is our duty, however, to pray for him, and to beg that God would remove the evil from his sanctuary: The life of the preacher may be criminal, but when he delivers the truths of the gospel, it is God who speaks by his mouth; and not to practise what he teaches, is to reject God himself. From this we may learn the manner in which we ought to hear sermons, viz. with the respect which is due to the oracles of God: with attention to what is said, and a sincere desire to learn, and practise our duty, and not to satisfy an idle curiosity, or exercise a profane wit, in criticising the language of the preacher, or the manner of



his delivery : nor like those who are content to hear of virtue and vice in general, but will not allow the preacher to enlarge upon *particular truths*, which come home to themselves ; who care not to hear of those awful and important subjects of the Christian religion, viz. death, judgment, hell, and the eternal punishment of sinners : but say, as the Jews did to the prophet Isaias : *Tell us of agreeable things* : do not terrify us with such dismal subjects. But, alas ! this is deceiving ourselves, and abusing one of the most excellent means which God had established for our salvation.

A second instruction from this day's gospel concerns the pastors of the church, who ought seriously to consider the importance of the charge they have taken upon themselves. The faithful are committed to their care, and if the shepherds are wanting in their duty, their souls will be required at their hands : It is the duty of a pastor to nourish and feed his flock with the wholesome food of sound doctrine ; and when the laity are told to practise what their pastor teaches, it is pre-supposed *that his doctrine is orthodox, and approved by the church*. The prophet complained : *The little ones have asked for bread, and there was no one would give it to them*. Wo, then, to those pastors, who neglect to instruct the faithful or feed

their flock with the spiritual food of the word of God! What St. Paul writes to Timothy, equally regards every one who is entrusted with the care of souls. *Preach the word, be instant in season, out of season, reprove, entreat, rebuke with all patience and doctrine.* The divine work must be delivered with an apostolic freedom, for a preacher who does his duty, does not so much regard the inclinations of his auditors as their spiritual necessities: he delivers the serious truths of the gospel without dissimulation, or concealing from sinners the danger of their situation. Preachers are called in scripture the trumpeters of the Lord; *Sound the trumpet in Sion. Cry aloud,* says God to the prophet: *exalt your voice as a trumpet, and denounce to my people their sins.* These expressions signify that the voice of the ministers of the divine word must, like trumpets, alarm and make the sinner tremble, and not like softer instruments, soothe him into a false and fatal security.

But the most essential duty of pastors is to enforce what they deliver from the pulpit by their own practise. A preacher who tells the people their duty with force and energy, and does not practise what he teaches, does but little good: it is hard to impress any duty as indispensable or necessary, when they who rec-

commend it do not themselves observe it: it is therefore incumbent on all ministers of the divine word to adorn their sacred character by a holy and an exemplary life, which will cause their instructions to be duly regarded by the people.

## PRAYER.

O, MERCIFUL JESUS! Author of grace and holiness! send down thy Holy Spirit upon all those whom thou hast called to thy sacred ministry: replenish them with the gifts of the Holy Ghost, that their lives may be exemplary patterns of what they teach: imprint on the hearts of all men a due respect for thy holy word, and for the ministers thereof. *May thy priests, O, Lord, be endued with righteousness:* and may thy people hearken to them with a reverent attention, and diligently practise what they inculcate. Thou hast said: *The priest's lips shall preserve knowledge.* And that it is from them we must learn our duty, and not seek from their faults to justify our own.

O, the immensity of thy goodness, my God! in affording us so excellent a means of knowing our duty to thee, and of being conducted in the way to eternal happiness. Blessed forever be the wisdom of thy providence in thus consulting our wants: make me sensible, dear Lord, of this

inestimable favor, and enable me to make a right use thereof by attentively hearkening to thy voice, when speaking to me by thy ministers, and diligently practising what thou teachest. May thy holy word be the inviolable rule of my conduct, and may I never swerve from the way of thy commandments. May the instructions I hear from thy ministers, like seed sown upon good ground, bring forth fruit to eternal life.

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## WEDNESDAY

IN THE SECOND WEEK OF LENT.

GOSPEL.—*Matt.* xx. 17.-28.

*At that time :* Jesus going up to Jerusalem, took the twelve disciples apart, and said to them : Behold we go up to Jerusalem, and the Son of Man shall be betrayed to the chief priests and the scribes, and they shall condemn him to death, and shall deliver him to the Gentiles to be mocked, and scourged and crucified, and the third day he shall rise again. [\* Then came to him the mother of the sons

\* Here begins the Gospel of St. James, 25th July, and closes at †.

of Zebedee with her sons, adoring and asking something of him. Who said to her: What wilt thou? She saith to him: Say that these my two sons may sit, the one on thy right hand, and the other on thy left, in thy kingdom. And Jesus answering, said: You know not what you ask. Can you drink the chalice that I shall drink? They say to him: We can. He saith to them: My chalice indeed you shall drink: but to sit on my right or left hand, is not mine to give to you, but to them for whom it is prepared by my Father. † ] And the ten hearing it were moved with indignation against the two brethren. But Jesus called them to him and said: You know that the princes of the Gentiles lord it over them; and they that are the greater exercise power upon them. It shall not be so among you, but whosoever will be the greater among you, let him be your minister: and he that will be first among you, shall be your servant. Even as the Son of Man is not come to be ministered unto, but to minister, and to give his life a redemption for many.

## INSTRUCTION.

THE apostles, though they had left all things to follow Christ, whom they acknowledged to be the promised Messiah, yet, like the other

Jews, they expected he would establish a temporal kingdom, wherein St. James and St. John desired to be distinguished above the rest ; but not presuming to express their wishes to Christ themselves, they prevailed on their mother to beg of Jesus that they might sit, the one on his right, and the other on his left hand, in his kingdom. Ambition is always dangerous, it takes deep root, and produces the most inordinate desires : this pernicious love of preference frequently lays hold of those who pretend to follow Christ, and makes them desire honor and preferment, whilst they call themselves the disciples of the humble Jesus.

The effects of this passion may be seen in the conduct of these two apostles. In answer to their petition, Christ demands whether they could drink of the cup of his sufferings : to which they immediately replied in the affirmative, without considering either their own strength, or the meaning of the question put to them by Jesus Christ. He therefore told their mother, that she knew not what she asked : and said to her sons : *My chalice indeed ye shall drink, but to sit at my right or left hand is not mine to give you, but to those for whom it is prepared by my Father.* The petition of the two disciples raised the indignation of the other ten disciples, and from thence Christ

takes an occasion to give them and us an admirable lesson of humility. He reprehended the sons of Zebedee for their ambitious desires : and likewise reproves the rest of the apostles for being angry with them on that account. The meek Jesus, *the Prince of Peace*, allows not discord or contention amongst his followers. Pride and ambition are the parents of strife and contention ; and both are incompatible with the character of a disciple of Christ. If we would be great in his sight, we must be little in our own, and imitate his humility.

Humility then being the proper badge of a Christian, we ought to be careful to prefer it to all exterior marks of honor and preference. Humility is the particular lesson we are to learn in the school of Christ, who says : *Learn of me, for I am meek and humble of heart*. Without this virtue, in vain do we pretend to be Christians : It is the foundation of the spiritual edifice, which if not deeply laid, the superstructure will soon be subverted. A proud Christian is a direct contradiction ; for light and darkness are not more opposite and incompatible than pride and Christianity. Jesus Christ in his own divine person has given us a most perfect example of humility. Being the *Son of God*, nay, *God himself*, he vouchsafed to

*become man* : to be born of a poor and humble virgin : to lead a poor and contemptible life : to be called, in scorn, the carpenter's son : and, finally, to expire under all the shame and ignominy of the cross ! After such an example, shall a Christian dare to be proud ? Ah, no ! on the contrary, if he has any regard for his sacred character, he will endeavor to guard himself against pride and ambition, as against his most cruel enemies, who would deprive him of his birthright. There can be no security but by walking in the paths of humility, without aspiring to honors and exaltation. If we had a perfect knowledge of ourselves, we would not desire to be preferred before others ; but remain content in that station, be it ever so humble, wherein God has placed us, till it shall please him to say : *Friend, sit up higher*. Which, if not in this world, will assuredly be our lot in the next, where humility will meet with a glorious recompense, and procure us a place in the kingdom of God ; since truth itself has declared, that, *He who humbles himself, shall be exalted*.

## PRAYER.

O, SAVIOUR of the world ! eradicate the noxious weeds of pride and ambition from the garden of my heart, lest they infect and poison



my soul. Deliver me, O, Lord, from these violent passions, and suffer them not to prevail over me : make me truly humble, and content with the lowest place : let me never repine at seeing others preferred before me, or more esteemed than myself : teach me, O, Jesus ! to know myself, that being convinced of my own weakness, I may through thy mercy possess perfect humility, and thereby render myself pleasing to thee. Dearest Lord ! I am not only contented, but also desirous to drink of thy cup, and partake of thy sufferings ; for I know the cross is the price of a heavenly crown : nor can I ever hope to reign with thee, if I do not suffer with thee, and for thee.

When I consider, O, dear and suffering Redeemer ! how much thou hast suffered for my sake, how ought I to blush, and feel confounded at my own wretched weakness ! Since I call myself thy disciple, ought I not to take up my cross and follow thee ? O, my adorable Master ! to my shame be it said, I dread to hear of suffering, and shrink back at every little cross I meet. Dearest Jesus ! correct this disposition of my heart : grant me a love of the cross, and make me willing to suffer with thee. The cross is the badge of thy followers, and shall I be ashamed to wear it ? No, my Saviour ; as it is my ambition, to be thy dis-

ciple, I will glory in tribulation, that I may suffer with and for thee ; and mayest thou acknowledge me for one of thy followers, that carrying my cross after thee in this world, I may be crowned by thee in heaven.

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## THURSDAY

IN THE SECOND WEEK OF LENT.

GOSPEL.—*Luke xvi. 19-31.*

*At that time ; Jesus said unto the Pharisees :* There was a certain rich man, who was clothed in purple and fine linen, and feasted sumptuously every day. And there was a certain beggar named Lazarus, who lay at his gate, full of sores, desiring to be fed with the crumbs that fell from the rich man's table, and no one did give him ; moreover, the dogs came and licked his sores. And it came to pass that the beggar died, and was carried by the angels into Abraham's bosom. And the rich man also died, and he was buried in hell. And lifting up his eyes, when he was in torments, he saw Abraham afar off, and Lazarus in his bosom : And he cried, and said : Father Abraham, have mercy on me, and send Lazarus that he may dip

the tip of his finger in water, to cool my tongue, for I am tormented in this flame. And Abraham said to him : Son, remember that thou didst receive good things in thy lifetime, and likewise Lazarus evil things : but now he is comforted, and thou art tormented. And besides all this, between us and you there is fixed a great chaos : so that they who would pass from hence to you, cannot, nor from thence come hither. And he said : Then, father, I beseech thee that thou wouldst send him to my father's house ; for I have five brethren, that he may testify unto them, lest they also come into this place of torments. And Abraham said to him : They have Moses and the prophets : let them hear them. But he said : No, Father Abraham, but if one went to them from the dead, they will do penance. And he said to him : If they hear not Moses and the prophets, neither will they believe if one rise again from the dead.

#### INSTRUCTION.

THE holy Fathers are divided in their sentiments concerning the subject of this day's gospel : some esteem it a true history, others a parable : but in whatever way we consider it, it demands our serious attention. For it gives a

necessary precaution to the rich, and affords great consolation to the poor: the rich may learn what they are to expect, if they make an ill use of their riches; and the poor how to convert their poverty into an instrument of salvation, and a means of obtaining eternal happiness. Let us make a short reflection on each.

There was a certain rich man who was clothed in purple and silk, and fared sumptuously every day; and when he died, was buried in hell, from whence he exclaimed, *I am tormented in these flames*. Ah, sad end of all his pomp and grandeur! Fatal effects of a life spent in luxury and pleasure! But what was the cause of his damnation? Was he damned for being rich? *No; riches in themselves are not evil: they contain no intrinsic malice; they are the gifts of God, the effects of his bounty, and therefore may be of great use towards gaining heaven.*—Though Abraham, David, and many other saints and holy men were rich, they nevertheless sanctified themselves in the midst of abundance. Was he damned for being clothed in purple and silk? No; persons of distinction are nowhere forbid to be clad magnificently. Hester and Judith wore rich and sumptuous apparel. What then could be the reason why this unfortunate rich man should, after his death, be burned in hell? Many causes

may be assigned, which will also damn those rich men who follow his example.

The scripture makes no mention of his having obtained his riches by injustice ; but on the supposition that he had so acquired them, we need not seek for any other cause of his damnation ; for, whoever thus acquires riches, will assuredly find he has made too dear a purchase, and riches thus procured will certainly plunge a soul into hell. But supposing him to have entered upon a large estate by inheritance, or to have acquired a great fortune by just, and honorable means, we shall at length find his damnation to have been effected by an improper use of riches, and that this was the cause, and the only cause of his eternal misery. Though riches in themselves are not evil, yet, if we convert them to no other purpose than to serve our pride, or gratify our sensual appetites, they will prove the cause of our eternal ruin ; and, like this rich man, after death we shall find our souls buried in hell. But that which seems the principal cause of his damnation, *was a want of mercy and compassion for the poor.* Lazarus, who lay at his gate full of sores, only desired the crumbs which fell from his table, and those he refused to give him ; more cruel and hard-hearted in his refusal than the dogs who came and licked the sores of this poor

beggar. *Ah ! here let these rich consider and tremble*, who, feeling no compassion for the poor, refuse to give them any relief : and as they share with Dives in his crime, so they must expect to partake of his punishment. That such was the case of this rich man, is obvious from the answer of Abraham : *Son, remember that thou didst receive good things in thy lifetime, and Lazarus evil things ; but now he is comforted, and thou art tormented*. He was justly denied a drop of water to cool the tip of his tongue, who had denied Lazarus the crumbs which fell from his table. Such will be the fate of the uncharitable rich, to whom Christ at the last day will say : *Go, ye cursed into everlasting fire ; for I was hungry, and ye gave me not to eat : I was thirsty, and ye gave me not to drink. Inasmuch as you did it not to one of the least of these, neither have ye done it to me*. Let the rich then learn to make a proper use of their riches : and whilst they are allowed to maintain their rank, and live according to their station in this world, let them remember, that whatever part of the surplus is spent in the indulgence of criminal pleasures will produce the most fatal consequences. Let them learn to be charitable to the poor, and be always willing to relieve them in their necessities : thus we can convert our riches into instruments of piety to

fit us for eternal bliss. And thus we may enjoy the good things of this world, without losing those of the next.

But, whilst the rich behold a terrible example in the person of Dives, the poor may find matter of great consolation in that of Lazarus. He was not only poor, but full of sores, and in such extreme want, as to beg for the crumbs that fell from the rich man's table. Ah ! how deplorable his condition, if considered only with regard to *this world* ; but how truly happy with respect to the *next*. He died, and was carried by angels into Abraham's bosom. O, happy poverty, that meets with so glorious a recompense ! Let this be your comfort, O, you, who labor under the hardships of disease and indigence ! Let this make you easy, who by the dispensation of providence, are obliged to labor to procure a scanty livelihood ; you are the friends whom God has chosen to himself, the *poor of this world, rich in grace*. Christ has said : *Blessed are ye poor, because yours is the kingdom of God. Blessed are ye that are hungry now, because ye shall be filled*. You are in the same state which Christ himself has chosen, and which he has sanctified in his own person : like you, he was poor ; nay, his poverty was so great, that he said of himself : "*The foxes have holes, and the birds of the air*

*nesses : but the Son of Man hath not where to lay his head."* Poverty, then, is not such a misfortune as the world supposes ; it is a state which delivers us from an infinite number of those dangerous occasions to which riches expose us : all the hardships of a poor and humble state, will be abundantly recompensed by the glories of heaven. Poverty in this life, and Abraham's bosom in the next, is infinitely preferable to the purple and riches of Dives, followed by the eternal torments of hell.

As it was not his riches, but the abuse of them, that caused the damnation of Dives ; so, it was not the poverty alone, but the patience of Lazarus that saved him. As we may be rich and obtain salvation, so may we be poor and incur damnation, if we repine at the decrees of Providence ; if we seek to extricate ourselves from poverty by unlawful means ; if we are poor in fact, but rich in desire, and are not content with our state ; if, working for this world we do nothing for the next, and neglect our duty to God ; poverty will be of no advantage to us ; it will be our misfortune here, but doubly so hereafter. To prevent this, we must to our exterior poverty unite an interior resignation of spirit, by being really content with our lot, and sanctify the misery of our state, by a patient submission to the will of



God ; by making it our greatest care to become rich in grace and good works, and thereby to lay up for ourselves lasting treasures in heaven : this is that poverty which our blessed Saviour declares *blessed* ; that poverty, in which, if we die, the angels will assuredly convey our souls into Abraham's bosom.

## PRAYER.

SINCE riches, O, my God ! are thy gifts, when thou bestowest them upon us, give us also thy grace to make a right use of them ; but as they are dangerous, and may prove the cause of our ruin, suffer us not to fix our hearts upon them. O, let us rather despise them, that we may only search after the riches of thy kingdom : let me not place my affections upon the things of this world, or neglect my duty to thee ; nor for obtaining the transitory enjoyments of the earth, hazard the loss of the eternal joys of heaven : if thou art pleased to give me the good things of this world, I will endeavor to apply them to thy honor and glory, and the benefit of those in want : if thou wilt that I remain poor, Lord, I am content ; nay, I desire to suffer here, that I may be happy hereafter.

When I consider, O, my God ! the miserable fate of this rich man, how much ought I to fear and tremble, lest I make an ill use of what thy

bounty has conferred upon me. Whatever thou bestowest upon me is thy gift; ought I not then be grateful for thy favor? Shall I live in plenty and ease, and feel no compassion for the poor and needy? No; O, most bountiful and liberal Lord, I will feed the hungry, give drink to the thirsty, clothes to the naked, and help the poor to the utmost of my power: it is thus I will give back to thee what I have so plentifully received from thy bountiful hands. I will endeavor to be rich in heaven, by placing there my treasures together with my heart: thus do I hope that to the good things thou givest me in this life, thou wilt mercifully add the happiness of the next, since thou hast said: *Blessed are the merciful, for they shall obtain mercy.*

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## FRIDAY

IN THE SECOND WEEK OF LENT.

GOSPEL.—*Matt. xxi. 33-46.*

*At that time: Jesus spoke to the multitude of the Jews, and to the chief priests, this parable: There was a man an householder who planted a vineyard, and made a hedge round about it, and dug in it a press, and built a tower, and let it out to husbandmen: and went into a*

strange country. And when the time of the fruits drew nigh, he sent his servants to the husbandmen, that they might receive the fruits thereof. And the husbandmen laying hands on his servants, beat one, and killed another, and stoned another. Again he sent other servants more than the former: and they did to them in like manner. And last of all he sent them his Son, saying: They will reverence my Son. But the husbandmen seeing the Son, they said among themselves: This is the heir, come, let us kill him, and we shall have his inheritance. And taking him they cast him forth out of the vineyard, and killed him. When therefore the lord of the vineyard shall come, what will he do to those husbandmen? They say to him: He will bring those evil men to an evil end: and will let out his vineyard to other husbandmen, that shall render him the fruit in due season. Jesus saith to them: Have you never read in the Scriptures: "The stone which the builders rejected, the same is become the head of the corner? By the Lord this hath been done, and it is wonderful in our eyes." Therefore I say to you, that the kingdom of God shall be taken from you, and shall be given to a nation yielding the fruits thereof. And whosoever shall fall on this stone, shall be

broken : but on whomsoever it shall fall, it shall grind him to powder. And when the chief Priests and Pharisees had heard his parables, they knew that he spoke of them. And seeking to lay hands on him, they feared the multitude : because they held him as a prophet.

#### INSTRUCTION.

BY the parable in this day's gospel, our blessed Saviour reproaches the Jews with obstinacy, ingratitude to God, and a criminal abuse of his favors ; and at the same time he threatens them with the most severe punishments, viz. the taking away of the kingdom of God from amongst them. The chief Priests and Pharisees perceiving that the parable was designed for them, would willingly have made Christ feel the effects of their resentment, but were afraid of the people, who esteemed our blessed Lord as a prophet.

But this significant parable is not less applicable to Christians than to Jews. It is an instructive lesson, wherein we may learn what Christ has done for us, in establishing the mysterious vineyard of his church, which he has planted, and watered with his own blood. We may also behold the ingratitude of many Christians, who by the abuse of the graces conferred

upon them, ought to tremble at the terrible judgment denounced against them.

If we consider what Jesus Christ has undergone, to establish his church, we shall discover the effects of those infinite pains and labors which he underwent while upon earth ; his sacred blood being the cement, wherewith he raised up this mysterious edifice, of which every Christian forms a part. For its perpetual duration, he governs and directs it by his holy Spirit ; he refreshes and enlivens it by his holy sacraments, those fountains of divine grace, especially that of the holy altar, in which he gives his own sacred body and blood to be the spiritual food of our souls, as a sure pledge of that infinite glory and happiness wherewith he will hereafter reward us in heaven, if now we diligently labor in this his mystical vineyard, and, like faithful husbandmen, render him fruit in due season. Thus we may learn the happiness of being Christians, or laborers in the vineyard of the HOLY CATHOLIC CHURCH, whilst by the inscrutable dispensations of Providence, so many are left in the desert of infidelity and unbelief. Is it not then natural to expect, that such great and singular favors should meet with an adequate return of gratitude ? But alas ! how can we sufficiently deplore the unaccountable insensibility of the greatest part of Christians,

who make no other use of the mercies of God, than to abuse them.

Although ingratitude is so very odious as to incur universal detestation, yet there is nothing more common, especially with regard to things that relate to God. In this vice we may observe four different degrees: *first*, not to make a suitable return for benefits received: *secondly*, to forget those benefits: *thirdly*, to return evil for good: and *fourthly*, to employ the favors received to the prejudice of the donor. Each of these degrees of ingratitude is manifest in the conduct of the husbandmen, as related in this day's gospel. 1. In return for the favor conferred on them, in letting out his vineyard to them, they basely refused to let him have any of its fruit. 2. Unmindful that they only held the vineyard upon lease, they acted as if they were its original lords and proprietors. 3. They returned their Lord evil for good, in the abuse of his servants, and the murder of his son. 4. They made the vineyard itself the instrument of committing those horrid outrages against him. Behold in this parable a true copy of the extreme ingratitude of many Christians. *First*, they make no return for the favors God has conferred on them; they neglect his holy graces, which would enable them to work out their salvation, and regard nothing

but the pleasures and enjoyments of this life. *Secondly*, they forget what he has done for them, and bury the recollection of their obligations to him in an idle, sensual, and worldly life. *Thirdly*, they return evil for good ; for the more bountiful he is, the more they are ungrateful. *Lastly*, they make use of the benefits they receive, to displease and offend him. Their health is abused, to offend him by intemperance and excess ; their riches to displease him by pride and extravagance ; their wit and talents to turn into ridicule the most serious truths of the gospel. How frequently are his graces and the sacraments of the church profaned, and converted into a mask to conceal their hypocrisy ? Alas ! this melancholy portrait, so evident in the conduct of many Christians, cannot be said to be an exaggeration.

But what will be the consequence of a conduct so opposite to the character of a Christian ? Ah ! the severest punishment God can inflict upon such ungrateful Christians, is to withdraw those graces which were designed for their salvation, and bestow them on others, who may thereby be saved. The husbandmen in the gospel were thus treated : the vineyard was taken from them, and let out to others. The Jews were punished in this manner ; the kingdom of God was taken from them, and

given to the Gentiles, who, by the preaching of the apostles, came to the knowledge of Jesus Christ, whilst they in return for their ingratitude, remain a race abandoned by God, banished from their country, without temple, without sacrifice, the scorn of the whole world. O, how much ought we to dread so terrible a punishment ! What the Jews have suffered for their wickedness and ingratitude, has been also the sad fate of many Christian kingdoms and states and the deplorable lot of many once flourishing churches, whose candlesticks are removed, whose light has been extinguished. God observes the same economy towards particular persons. When they abuse his gifts, he withdraws his graces from them, and abandons them to the miserable consequences of being left to themselves.

#### PRAYER.

O, MY God ! how great is my obligation to bless and praise thy holy name for the innumerable favors thou hast bestowed on me ! Thou hast called me to the knowledge of thyself, *and made me a member of the Catholic church*, wherein thou hast afforded me the most excellent means to secure my salvation. But what return have I made for so gracious a favor ? Alas ! my God, I am overwhelmed



with confusion at the sight of my ingratitude. Ah! how have I despised and abused thy mercies! Alas! I have just reason to fear lest thou shouldst withdraw thy grace from me. I acknowledge my unworthiness and implore thy mercy. O, God, to all thy other favors, grant me sincere sorrow for my past offenses, and grace never to offend thee more. May I daily become more worthy of the graces and favors thou hast conferred on me, and may I make it my continual study to offer thee the acceptable fruit of love, gratitude, and obedience.

If love, dear Lord, requires a suitable return, how greatly am I bound to love thee, who hast loved me with an eternal love? O, may the consideration of so boundless a love, soften my hard heart, and cause it to melt in the flames of a reciprocal love for thee. O, thou only true and worthy object of love, let me love thee in the most perfect manner of which I am capable, for I can never love thee too much, nor as much as thou deservest. Burn, O, my soul! with love of a God so amiable and deserving in himself, and so bountiful and good to thee. O, my God! I desire to love thee with my whole heart, my whole mind, and my whole strength, purely for the sake of thyself alone. O, may my every respiration be an act of the most fer-

vent and perfect love of thee ! I will endeavor to love thee forever : O, may I cease to exist, before I desist from loving thee, my Lord, and my God.

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## SATURDAY

IN THE SECOND WEEK OF LENT.

GOSPEL.—*Luke xv. 11-32.*

*At that time ; Jesus spoke to the Scribes and Pharisees this parable : A certain man had two sons : and the younger of them said to his father : Father, give me the portion of substance that falleth to me. And he divided unto them his substance. And not many days after, the younger son, gathering all together, went abroad into a far country and there wasted his substance living riotously. And after he had spent all, there came a mighty famine in that country, and he began to be in want. And he went and cleaved to one of the citizens of that country. And he sent him into his farm to feed swine. And he would fain have filled his belly with the husks the swine did eat : and no man gave unto him. And returning to himself he said : How many hired servants in my father's house abound with bread, and I here perish with hunger ? I will arise, and will*

go to my father, and say to him : Father, I have sinned against heaven, and before thee : I am not now worthy to be called thy son : make me as one of thy hired servants. And rising up he came to his father. And when he was yet a great way off, his father saw him, and was moved with compassion, and running to him fell upon his neck and kissed him. And the son said to him : Father, I have sinned against heaven, and before thee : I am not now worthy to be called thy son. And the father said to his servants : Bring forth quickly the first robe, and put it on him, and put a ring on his hand, and shoes on his feet : and bring hither the fatted calf, and kill it, and let us eat, and make merry : because this my son was dead, and is now come to life again : was lost, and is found. And they began to be merry. Now his eldest son was in the field : and when he came and drew nigh to the house, he heard music and dancing : and he called one of the servants, and asked what these things meant. And he said to him : Thy brother is come, and thy father hath killed the fatted calf, because he hath received him safe. And he was angry, and would not go in. His father, therefore, coming out, began to entreat him. And he answering, said to his father : Behold, for so many years do I serve thee, and I have never

transgressed thy commandment, and yet thou hast never given me a kid to make merry with my friends: but as soon as this thy son is come, who hath devoured his substance with harlots, thou hast killed for him the fatted calf. But he said to him: Son, thou art always with me, and all I have is thine. But it was fit we should make merry and be glad, for this thy brother was dead, and is come to life again; he was lost, and is found.

#### INSTRUCTION.

THE Son of God, by having so often declared that he came into this world to seek after, and save his lost sheep, makes it apparent how sincerely he desires that no one should perish, but that every one should be saved. The same gracious disposition towards sinners he demonstrates by many significant parables; but in that which is read in the gospel of this day, his *mercy* is exhibited in such a tender and engaging manner, as cannot but afford the greatest consolation to all penitents. Sinners may here behold the kind, the tender reception they may hope to find, if, like the prodigal son, they will but return to their father. The prodigal having demanded the portion intended for him, and his indulgent father having complied with

his desires, he shortly after went from home into a distant country, and there spent his fortune in a riotous manner. But falling into such extreme want as to be obliged to feed swine, the wretchedness of his situation at length opened his eyes so effectually, that he instantly became sensible of his folly in having left his father's house. He began to reflect that the menial servants of his father lived in plenty, whilst he was ready to perish with hunger. He called to mind the tender affection of his father, and from thence began to hope he might be again received by him, if not as a son, of which dignity he acknowledged himself unworthy, at least as an hired servant. Inspired with this hope, he resolved to make the trial. *I will rise up*, said he, *and go to my father*. He did so immediately ; and when his father, at a great distance, saw him returning, moved with compassion, he ran to meet and embrace him. The prostrate penitent son humbly acknowledges his fault : *Father, I have sinned against heaven, and before thee*, and begs to be admitted into the number of his servants ; but the affectionate parent orders him to be clothed in the most costly robe, puts a ring on his finger, and then commands the fatted calf to be killed, that they might rejoice and make merry on account of his safe return.

The first part of this parable exhibits a lively representation of the infatuated conduct of those sinners, who, deserting the house of their heavenly Father, consume their substance, dissipate his graces and favors; and when reduced to the greatest distress, by a life of sin and excess, are at a loss what to do. The devil, who seduced them to tread in the steps of the prodigal, to walk with him in the ways of sin and to depart further and further from their father's house, does all he can to prevent them from imitating his repentance. For this purpose he sets their sins before them in the worst light, and endeavors to persuade them that they cannot hope to obtain pardon; that the justice of God is too much incensed to afford them any mercy; and that if they would repent, it is too late, as they have no time to do penance, or make any satisfaction for the multitude and enormity of their sins. Thus having first persuaded them to sin, he endeavors to cast them into despair. But this artifice of the devil must not be regarded, nor ought any sinner, how many, and enormous soever, his crimes may be, ever despond. The mercy of God infinitely surpasses the wickedness of any sinner; and though his justice may be provoked by a long habit, and continuance in sin, yet his mercy is always at hand to forgive upon a

sincere repentance. Nor must a sinner believe the devil when he suggests that he has no time to repent. Though a sinner may not have long to live, yet he has time enough to save his soul ; this truth is grounded on the unerring word of God, which positively declares, *that at what time soever a sinner is converted, and does penance, he shall save his soul and live.* It is further confirmed by the examples of Mary Magdalen, the Samaritan woman, St. Peter and St. Paul, the thief on the cross, and many others, who, though very great sinners, yet obtained mercy, and afterwards became illustrious saints. Though we may have offended God grievously, still he is always ready and willing to pardon us. *As I live, saith the Lord, I desire not the death of a sinner.* O, how happy are we, says Tertullian, since God engages himself, and that by an oath, to show mercy to a sinner if he will but do penance ! Must we not then be doubly miserable not to believe God, even when he swears in our favor ? Ah, what encouragement to our hopes ! If any then are lost, it is through their own fault, because they despair, and even reject that mercy which God offers them : to such it may be truly said : *Thy perdition is of thyself, O, Israel.*

## PRAYER.

O, BOUNTIFUL GOD ! how quickly, and how easily, art thou reconciled to penitent sinners ! What a difference between thy anger, O, Lord, and that of thy creature man ! When we are once offended, with what difficulty are we appeased ! But however justly thou art offended thou are soon reconciled. At the dropping of a penitent tear, or by an humble acknowledgment of our sins, thy justice is instantly appeased, and thou openest immediately the gates of mercy to sinners. A few moments of contrition suffice to procure an eternity of happiness. What bounty ! what mercy ! Yet permit not thy clemency and goodness, dear Lord, to be abused by a neglect of our duty to thee, nor by a presumptuous audacity to persevere in our sins. Whilst we hope in thy mercy, let us fear to provoke thy justice : let us not, by ingratitude and impenitence, provoke thee to abandon us, and suffer us to die in our sin. O, Father of heaven ! O, indulgent and tender parent, what shall I say ? I have, alas ! *strayed from thy house, I have dissipated and wasted those goods of grace*, those blessings which thou hast bestowed upon me : reduced as I am to the greatest misery, what can I do but return to thee with a penitent and a contrite heart ? /



*will arise and go to thee, my heavenly Father, and will say : I have sinned against heaven, and before thee. Have mercy on me, then, O, my Father ! and receive me, if not as a child, yet as one of the least of thy servants : clothe me with the robes of thy mercy. O, grant me the kiss of peace, and may the angels in heaven rejoice at my conversion !* May I never more abandon thee. I desire from this moment to continue faithful to thee, that I may one day be admitted into the mansions of bliss, there to praise and glorify thee, there to love and enjoy thee forever.

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## MONDAY

IN THE THIRD WEEK OF LENT.

GOSPLE.—*Luke iv. 23-30.*

*At that time ; Jesus said to the Pharisees :* Doubtless you will say to me this similitude : Physician heal thyself : as great things as we have heard done in Capharnaum, do also here in thy own country. And he said : Amen, I say to you, that no prophet is accepted in his own country. In truth I say to you, there were many widows in the days of Elias in Israel, when heaven was shut up three years and six

months: when there was a great famine throughout all the land: and to none of them was Elias sent, but to Sarepta of Sidon to a widow woman. And there were many lepers in Israel in the time of Eliseus the prophet: and none of them was cleansed but Naaman the Syrian. And all they in the synagogue, hearing these things, were filled with anger. And they rose up and thrust him out of the city: and they brought him to the brow of the hill whereon their city was built, that they might cast him down headlong. But he, passing through the midst of them, went his way.

#### INSTRUCTION.

ZEAL, when guided by discretion, is an excellent virtue, a necessary ingredient in the character of a good Christian. To have a well-ordered zeal for the good of others, is to imitate God himself in the most excellent of all his works. But where zeal is not properly directed, it ceases to be a virtue, and becomes a most dangerous evil. The ardor which the Pharisees showed, was a fiery zeal, the effects of pride and hypocrisy, which neither terminated in the glory of God or the good of their neighbor. Nor was it governed either by reason or religion; and for this our blessed Lord fre-

quently reprimanded them. But though his reproofs were given in the mildest and most engaging manner, and with a sincere desire for their conversion, yet they made no other return than to redouble their false and injurious calumnies against his sacred person and doctrine. He, nevertheless, continued to reprove their obstinacy and infidelity, and plainly told them, that notwithstanding their boasted prerogative of being the children of Abraham, and the peculiar people of God, yet, having rendered themselves unworthy of the continuance of his favor, the mercy they had rejected should be shown to the Gentiles ; intimating this to them by the cure of Naaman the Syrian, and the prophet Elias being sent to a poor widow of Sarepta. They laid hold of him with an intent to fling him down the hill on which the city of Jerusalem was built. But he passed through them and went away : for his time of suffering not being come, they could not execute their design.

Among other instructions conveyed to us in the gospel of this day, are the qualities of *a true Christian zeal for the glory of God and the good of our neighbor*. This our blessed Saviour teaches us by the best of methods : his own incomparable example. A true zeal for others must be conformable to the zeal we ought to

have for ourselves ; for, where this is wanting, it may be justly suspected as false, or at least doubtful. These are the characteristics of that Christian zeal which the gospel recommends. Let our zeal, then, appear ever so ardent, if it be not possessed of these qualities, it is only counterfeit,—glittering, but of no intrinsic value.

In the order of charity, our zeal should be first directed to ourselves, and then towards others. If we are careless of ourselves, how can it be expected we should have any sincere regard for our neighbor ; for how is it possible that those who are indifferent about their own salvation, should give themselves any concern about the salvation of others ? I speak not here of those whose character and office oblige them to take care of those under their charge, but of Christians in general, who ought to have a zeal for the spiritual good of each other. Such ought, in the first place, be careful that their lives are conformable to the maxims of the gospel, and then they are well qualified to exercise their zeal towards their neighbor, and endeavor to reclaim him from vice to virtue ; for what can be more ridiculous than for a blasphemer to reprimand another for swearing, or for a drunkard to preach sobriety. The answer to such would undoubtedly be : *Physician, cure*

*thyself.* We forfeit a just pretense to reform others, when we do not correct ourselves ; it is for this reason our blessed Lord gives to such men this severe reproof: *Why dost thou see a mote in thy brother's eye, and dost not behold the beam in thy own eye? Hypocrite, first draw the beam out of thy own eye, and then thou shalt see to draw the mote out of thy brother's eye.* We must first exercise our zeal in reforming those abuses of which we ourselves may be guilty. Where this rule is not observed, our zeal will be not only unprofitable to ourselves, but of little service to others.

No evil is attended with more mischievous consequences, than an *ignorant zeal*; the sad effects of which, are testified by the innumerable heresies and schisms it has produced in the church, to the eternal ruin of thousands, *the authors whereof ever pretended a zeal for God's honor, and the purity of the faith.* Hence, being wilfully ignorant, and refusing to be taught, or submit to the authority of those placed over them, and appointed for their guides they precipitate themselves, and their seduced followers, into the vortex of error, and are lost. Christian zeal is likewise to be tempered with moderation, and should not exceed the bounds of that meekness prescribed in the gospel, which can be measured by no better rule, than what

we desire may be observed towards ourselves : this will exclude rashness, and impatience, the natural offspring of false zeal. We are, generally speaking, very indulgent towards ourselves : let us show the same tenderness towards our brethren, and those we desire to correct : let us all reform ourselves one by another ; but let each reform himself first, and then with mildness and fraternal charity, endeavor to reclaim his neighbor.

#### PRAYER.

O, SWEET JESUS ! who wast inspired with so ardent a zeal for the glory of thy heavenly Father, and the salvation of mankind, enlighten me, I beseech thee, by thy grace, and fill my heart with the same holy fire, that I may be not only zealous for the good of my own soul, but likewise for that of my neighbor ; let this holy ardor be so regulated by true charity, that I may never neglect myself, nor attempt to reform others with heat or passion, nor transgress the rules of humility, obedience, and submission to those whom thou hast placed over me, and thus *preserve the unity of the faith in the bonds of peace.*

O, Prince of Peace ! and lover of unity, preserve my soul in peace : grant me that peace which surpasses all understanding ; that peace

which the world can neither give nor take away : grant me peace with thee, my God, in the pardon of my sins, and peace with myself, in the testimony of a good conscience, void of guilt in thy sight and in the sight of man : peace with my neighbor, by never doing him an injury. Deliver me, O, Lord ! from an intemperate zeal : Let me always do good to others, and endeavor to procure their welfare, by a tender condescension to their weakness : May charity be always my guide in my intercourse with others, that I may gain souls to the knowledge of thy law, whereby they may learn *to serve thee in spirit and in truth.*

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## TUESDAY

IN THE THIRD WEEK OF LENT.

GOSPEL.—*Matt.* xviii. 15-22.

*At that time ; Jesus said to his disciples :* If thy brother shall offend against thee, go and rebuke him between thee and him alone. If he shall hear thee, thou shalt gain thy brother. But if he will not hear thee, take with thee one or two more : that in the mouth of two or three witnesses every word may

stand. And if he will not hear them, tell the church. And if he will not hear the church, let him be to thee as the heathen and publican. Amen I say to you, whatsoever you shall bind upon earth, shall be bound also in heaven; and whatsoever you shall loose upon earth, shall be loosed also in heaven. Again, I say to you, that if two of you shall consent upon earth, concerning anything whatsoever they shall ask, it shall be done to them by my Father who is in heaven. For where there are two or three gathered together in my name; there am I in the midst of them. Then came Peter unto him and said: Lord, how often shall my brother offend against me, and I forgive him? till seven times? Jesus saith to him: I say not to thee till seven times; but till seventy times seven times.

#### INSTRUCTION.

FROM the gospel of yesterday we spoke of zeal in general, and how it was to be rendered acceptable to God, advantageous to ourselves, and profitable to others. From the gospel of this day we learn how to exercise it in respect to one of the most important objects, to wit: *fraternal correction*, a duty not to be omitted on proper occasions, provided it be regulated



according to the advice given by our blessed Saviour. We live in an age in which there are vices enough to correct, and no want of zealots to correct them. Almost every one is become a judge of his brother, and the faults of others is the common topic of conversation. But the reason why corrections of this kind do more harm than good, is, because the advice not being properly given, is seldom or ever well taken : hence, little or no reformation ensues.

As the duty of correcting, or giving advice to another, is so exceedingly delicate, we must be careful to observe those conditions which the case requires ; for if we fail in them, we have little reason to expect our advice will produce any good effect. The necessary conditions are, that we give our advice piously, prudently, sweetly, and efficaciously. First, *piously*, or out of a true zeal for the glory of God and the good of our brother's soul, when we see it in danger of being lost by sin. There are, alas ! too many who declaim against vice, but then it is against those vices which are particularly contrary to their own humor and inclination. An extravagant spendthrift is very eloquent against covetousness and avarice : the miser as severely condemns the prodigal. There are others of a peevish, melancholy temper, who continually find fault with the con-

duct of others, for with them nothing is right : there are also many whose reproofs are the effects of envy, who censure others not so much for their faults as for their great and distinguished qualities. But, alas ! how little do we discover here of true charity, or zeal for the glory of God, or the spiritual good of our neighbour ? Whoever acts not on these motives is by no means qualified to give advice to another. In order to give our advice piously, we must ourselves be free from those vices we desire to correct. To succeed in fraternal correction, we must not only speak, but likewise act : that is, we must by an unblemished life show good example, which will give additional strength to our words. A second condition to be observed in giving advice is *prudence* : for if it be not given with prudence and discretion, *and at a proper time also*, our zeal, however charitable, may fail of success. We must also have regard to the temper and quality of the person to whom we give our advice and say nothing but what is necessary, to convince him of the enormity of the vice we would correct. Our admonition should be also well timed, and delivered in private, not in public, lest we should expose his faults to the world : hence our blessed Lord says : “ *If thy brother hath sinned against thee, go, and reprehend him be-*

*tween thee and him alone."* We must endeavor likewise to speak when he is properly disposed to hear us. If we would give advice to a passionate person, or to a drunkard, we must stop till his passion is over, or until he is sober : for whilst in a passion or drunk, he is incapable of hearing or attending to what we say : but when cool and sober, then he is able to attend to our advice and reflect on his misconduct. In all our admonitions, to prudence we must join *sweetness*, or an engaging air of *true charity*, without the least mixture of passion : we must, like the good Samaritan, pour oil and wine into his wounds : corrosives, though in some cases necessary, are never to be applied but when assuasives prove ineffectual, and on persons over whom we have authority. This is admirably exemplified in holy scripture, by the figs which the prophet applied to the sore of King Ezekias. Our admonitions ought to have nothing in them but sweetness, for the least harshness will render them useless, if not dangerous. Behold with how much address and gentleness the prophet Nathan reproved David ! The royal psalmist, as soon as he perceived it, condemned himself, and thereby obtained his pardon.

Mildness of manner is not incompatible with speaking efficaciously and with authority,

especially to those under our care, since a moderate and becoming warmth is sometimes necessary to make an impression upon those to whom we speak. Our blessed Saviour, who was mildness itself, spoke and acted with authority, when he drove the buyers and sellers out of the temple. When warmth becomes necessary, and is omitted, it involves us in the guilt of the high priest Heli, who reproved his sons, but because he did it in a faint and inefficacious manner, he experienced that terrible punishment threatened : “ *Therefore have I sworn, to the house of Heli, that the iniquity of his house shall not be expiated with victims, nor offerings forever. The wicked shall die in his iniquity, but at thy hand will I require his blood.*” That we may not be involved in this menace, let us endeavor by admonition to reclaim our brother from the paths of iniquity, and thus contribute to the advancement of our own happiness in the kingdom of heaven.

#### PRAYER.

O, JESUS ! grant me the spirit of Christian charity, whereby I may endeavor to reclaim those who have gone astray. Let me never be so far transported by a false zeal as to hate their persons, but rather love them as my

brethren, and thus endeavor to gain them to thee. Let me never partake of their crimes, by silence, or a neglect of seasonable admonitions. And may a sincere desire of doing good, be my principal motive, that I may find acceptance with thee.

O, Spirit of divine love ! come and take possession of my heart and soul, that I may be filled with love towards others. O, Jesus, God of love ! infinite source of all goodness, thou hast said that by loving one another we shall be known to be thy disciples. O, may I give daily proofs that I belong to thee, by truly loving my neighbor as myself. Enable me to make this love evident, by doing all I can to assist him, and in loving and serving thee. May I be ever ready to instruct the ignorant, counsel the doubtful, and correct sinners with prudence, mildness, and a well-tempered zeal, to the glory of thy holy name, and to the salvation of souls.

## WEDNESDAY

## IN THE THIRD WEEK OF LENT.

GOSPEL.—*Matt.* xv. 1-20.

*At that time :* The Scribes and Pharisees came from Jerusalem to Jesus, and saying to him : Why do thy disciples transgress the tradition of the ancients ? For they wash not their hands when they eat bread. But he answering, said to them : Why do you also transgress the commandment of God for your tradition ? For God said : "Honor thy father and mother : " and, "he that shall curse father or mother, let him die the death." But you say : Whosoever shall say to his father or mother, The gift whatsoever proceedeth from me, shall profit thee. And he shall not honor his father or mother : and you have made void the commandment of God for your tradition. Hypocrites, well hath Isaias prophesied of you, saying : "This people honoreth me with their lips, but their heart is far from me. And in vain do they worship me, teaching doctrines and commandments of men." And having called together the multitudes unto him, he said to them : Hear ye and un-

derstand. Not that which goeth into the mouth, defileth a man : but what cometh out of the mouth, this defileth a man. Then came his disciples, and said to him : Dost thou know that the Pharisees, when they heard this word, were scandalized ? But he answering, said : Every plant which my heavenly Father hath not planted, shall be rooted up. Let them alone : they are blind, and leaders of the blind. And if the blind lead the blind, both fall into the pit. And Peter answering said to him : Expound to us this parable. But he said : Are you also yet without understanding ? Do you not understand, that whatsoever entereth into the mouth, goeth into the belly, and is cast out into the privy ? But the things which proceed out of the mouth, come forth from the heart, and those things defile a man. For from the heart come forth evil thoughts, murders, adulteries, fornications, thefts, false testimonies, blasphemies. These are the things that defile a man. But to eat with unwashed hands doth not defile a man.

#### INSTRUCTION.

THE enormity of the detestable sin of hypocrisy may be learned from the severe woes our Saviour pronounces on the hypocritical Scribes

and Pharisees in this day's gospel : neither is it a sin less dangerous in its consequences, than odious before God ; consequences, not only terrible with respect to the hypocrite, but to others also, for which he must be accountable. From the gospel of this day, we might speak of hypocrisy itself, and show its enormity. But let us rather consider its evil consequences with regard to those who take occasion from the dissimulation of some, to entertain unfavorable notions of religion ; raise obstacles in the way of virtue ; or permit themselves to be imposed upon by hypocrites : of these three classes, the *first*, are libertines, or modern free-thinkers ; the *second*, some well-meaning people ; and the *third*, the weak and imprudent.

From the establishment of the Christian religion, libertines who were ever averse to follow its maxims, or regulate their lives by the precepts of the gospel, have uniformly endeavored to represent it as a mere invention of priestcraft, contrived to enslave the minds of men ; and from the behavior of some, who have endeavored to conceal their vices under the mask of virtue, they rashly conclude, that religion itself is no more than an artifice, to impose upon the multitude. But to *deny religion* because some *pretend to it*, who have it not, is



but a weak mode of reasoning, not consistent with that profound judgment, these gentlemen pretend to, who boast they are *masters of reason*, since we may venture to affirm, that the only reason why they reject religion *in speculation is*, because they have first cast it off *in practise*. Resolving to give full scope to their passions, and knowing themselves to have no claim to virtue, they are pleased with the notion, that those who appear virtuous are not so in reality, and because they discover some hypocrites, conclude that all who appear in behalf of religion are equally so. Thus, having no idea of *true piety*, they would persuade themselves and others, that it is no more than a specious phantom, an imaginary excellence, not to be found among men. Or if by the force of undeniable conviction they are obliged to grant, that there are Christians of solid piety, they endeavor to expose them to ridicule, and from the dissimulation of some, to cast the same stigma on those who practise religion in spirit and in truth.

Hypocrisy gives scandal to the sincere pious Christian, and throws many obstacles in the way of virtue. Many, rather than be considered hypocrites, and expose themselves to the ridicule, and laughter of the world, are unwilling to appear publicly in the cause of virtue.

They, in a great measure, *hide their candle under a bushel, instead of letting their light shine before men.* (Matt. v.) The apprehension of being represented as a bigot or a hypocrite, prevents them from attempting anything great, or heroic : and though they are virtuously disposed, and have a sincere horror for any kind of vice, yet a secret shame prevents them from speaking or acting with proper courage and resolution. *But is not this fearing man, rather than God ?* a conduct in reality as unreasonable as it is criminal. A Christian, whose profession obliges him to fear nothing but God, ought not to be afraid of being censured and laughed at by the world. Can he pretend, that to be devout is only to expose himself to be called a hypocrite ? This is the very reason why his zeal for religion and piety should increase, to convince libertines and others, that whatever they are pleased to say, true piety is no phantom ! since there are those who know *how to adore God in spirit and in truth.* (John iv.) It is his duty to convince them, that notwithstanding their prejudices and passions, they may be virtuous if they please, since they see others in the same state of life with themselves, abstain from sin, and practise true and solid virtue. Let no one then excuse himself from leading a virtuous life, but let him rather

rejoice to suffer ridicule in so glorious a cause. If it be a magnanimous action to espouse the cause of a suffering friend in this world, shall a Christian abandon the cause of God, through an apprehension of undergoing some raillery for his sake? If through shame we abandon virtue now, what shall we do at the hour of death, when we shall be abandoned by the world, by all creatures, and even by God himself? Ah! we shall then see our folly, when, alas! it will be too late to retrieve it.

Another pernicious effect of dissimulation is, that the weak and imprudent are often imposed upon by the counterfeit sanctity of hypocrites. This has caused disorders and divisions in the church of God; for heretics were never more successful than when they put on the mask of piety, affecting a sanctified exterior, condemning the smallest relaxations from ancient discipline, preaching mortification and the strictest morals, and thus, under the specious word *reformation*, they draw many simple and unwary souls after them into the pit of eternal perdition. These are the baneful effects of hypocrisy; and if, as our Saviour says, (*Matt. vii.*) we may know the tree by its fruits, we may easily discover what a bad tree it is. How much then does it behoove us to be upon our guard, not to be surprised or imposed on, or

give others reason to suspect that we are hypocrites ourselves.

PRAYER.

O, GOD of sincerity and truth ! to whom the secrets of all hearts are known, preserve me by thy grace from being infected by this odious vice, or being affected by its ill consequences. Let me acknowledge the truth of that holy religion thou hast revealed ; and with courage and sincerity, practise its duties. Let no worldly motives make me afraid or ashamed to own myself thy servant. Grant me an ardent and heroic zeal for the glory of thy name, and the salvation of souls : let libertines deride me, I will esteem it my greatest happiness, and consider it more glorious to suffer for thee, than to be master of the whole world. Thou art, O, Jesus ! my master, and I am thy disciple ; thou art my Lord, and I am thy servant ; and I will account it the highest honor to be treated as thou wast. With thy holy apostle I will say : *God forbid that I should glory but in the cross of Christ.* (Gal. vi.)

Yes, adorable Saviour ! I am content to suffer reproaches, whilst I endeavor to serve thee with zeal and fervor. Grant me the grace to discharge my religious duties with a sincere and upright heart ; with purity of intention, devoid

of all human respect, or hypocrisy. O, Lord! to whom the secrets of all hearts are known, and from whom nothing is concealed, let me not deceive myself, by an empty profession of religion. May a sincere desire to please thee alone, be the principle of all my actions: may I love thee above all other things: may I, with a firm resolution, constantly endeavor to tend towards thee, until I come to the enjoyment of thee, in the mansions of everlasting happiness.

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## THURSDAY

IN THE THIRD WEEK OF LENT.

GOSPEL.—*Luke iv. 38-44.*

*At that time:* Jesus rising up out of the synagogue, went into Simon's house. And Simon's wife's mother was taken with a great fever, and they besought him for her. And standing over her, he commanded the fever, and it left her. And immediately rising, she ministered to them. And when the sun was down, all they that had any sick with divers diseases, brought them to him. But he, laying his hands on every one of them, healed them. And devils went out from many, crying out and say-

ing : Thou art the Son of God. And he rebuking them suffered them not to speak, for they knew that he was Christ. And when it was day, going out he went into a desert place ; and the multitude sought him, and came to him ; and they stayed him that he should not depart from them. To whom he said : To other cities also I must preach the kingdom of God : for therefore am I sent. And he was preaching in the synagogues of Galilee.

#### INSTRUCTION.

SICKNESS, as it afflicts the body, and prevents us from attending to our temporal concerns, is an evil from which we may lawfully desire to be delivered : but when considered in a spiritual light, and in the order of grace, it will appear a blessing, from which great advantage may be reaped. The gospel of this day relates that St. Peter's mother-in-law lay sick of a fever. She was confined to her bed, when St. Peter and the other disciples besought Jesus Christ, that he would come and cure her : being restored to health, she rose up, and ministered to her divine physician. From these circumstances we may learn, *First*, that God frequently makes use of corporal sickness as a means to preserve us from the temptations to which we

are exposed by an uninterrupted state of health. *Secondly*, that in time of sickness, we should have recourse to Jesus Christ, as to our chief physician. *Thirdly*, that when, by his mercy, he has restored us to health, we make a right use of so great a blessing, by consecrating it to his service.

We should be convinced from experience, that the world is full of dangers. As a preservative against them, God is sometimes pleased to confine us to our beds by sickness, in order to withdraw us from the dangerous occasions of sin, and thereby afford us time to consider the world in its true light, and by making a virtue of necessity, improve our leisure hours by serious reflections. The mind being now at liberty, the objects which before so powerfully attracted our attention, have no longer any force: for, what are riches to a person who has no health to enjoy them? What are honors to him who sees death at hand ready to lay him in the grave, there to become the food of worms? What, alas! are pleasures to a sick man, whose thoughts are now wholly employed as to how he may avoid for the future what he has found to have been so prejudicial to his health?

Holy Job compares the life of man upon earth to a warfare, (*Job* vii). Since we find

ourselves continually exposed to the assaults of the world, the flesh and the devil, our most implacable enemies, the time of sickness may be called a kind of retreat from their fury, wherein we rally our scattered forces, that we may resist them with vigor. Such retreats are frequently the forerunners of a glorious victory. It is like retiring into a strong fortress, where secure from the attacks of our enemies we are at leisure to consider our condition, and take such precautions as may secure us victory in future combats. We are taught by the gospel of this day, how to obtain another favorable advantage in time of sickness, by having recourse to the advice and assistance of Jesus Christ.

When God afflicts us with sickness, he does not forbid us to apply to a physician, or to use any other lawful means for our recovery. But we must in the first place have recourse to him, acknowledge our illness to be the effect of his will: and from him expect our cure. For without him, neither the ablest physician, nor best of medicines, can restore us to health. It is only He who is the physician of our souls, as well as our bodies, that knows what is most expedient and profitable for both: corporal sickness frequently contributes to the health of the soul, therefore we are not to desire our re-



covery, but as it may be conducive to the glory of God and our spiritual good. In our sickness let us imitate St. Peter's mother-in-law, who had recourse to Jesus Christ; and the Centurion, who addressed himself to our Saviour in behalf of his sick servant. To this we must add patience and resignation, not only as to the time and manner of our recovery, but also as to the pain and trouble attending sickness: murmurs and complaints produce no other effect than to retard our cure: they deprive us, or at least diminish the merit of our sufferings, and are tiresome and disgusting to those who assist us. We must therefore be upon our guard against fretfulness and impatience, and beg of God to strengthen our weak nature by his grace, that all our sufferings may be consecrated to his glory and our good; and, that if it should please him to restore our health, we may evince our gratitude by dedicating it to his service.

We are further informed in this day's gospel, that St. Peter's mother-in-law having been cured by our Saviour, immediately rose up and ministered to him: hence we are taught the use we should make of our health. Those who are dangerously sick are generally very liberal in their promises of amendment of life, if it should please God to restore them to health; but it

too frequently happens, that after a recovery, these promises are no longer remembered: a horrible ingratitude, deserving the severest punishment! If then God hears our prayers, and raises us from a bed of sickness, let us religiously observe the promises we have made, and with renewed health, serve him with redoubled vigor and fidelity; then our sickness will prove, not unto death, but unto life, both here and hereafter.

#### PRAYER.

O, JESUS! when I reflect upon my past ingratitude, I am overwhelmed with shame and confusion! How often have I had recourse to thee, and thou hast mercifully granted my request? But alas! I have not risen up and waited upon thee. Pardon, dear Lord, this ungrateful behavior, and make me more faithful hereafter. Whenever it shall please thee to visit me with thy fatherly corrections, let me patiently submit to thy holy will, place my whole confidence in thee, and in all things desire nothing but the accomplishment of thy holy will.

May I never more be ungrateful to thee, O, my God! but may the daily experience I have of thy goodness fill my heart with the warmest

sentiments of gratitude. In all the dispensations of thy providence, in whatever thou permittest to befall me, may I always perceive and adore thy merciful designs for my good. In sickness I will adore thy sovereign will, and patiently suffer all its pains, as fatherly chastisements for my offenses. I will adore thee, punishing me here, in order that thou mayest spare me hereafter. When it shall please thee to restore me to health, I will consecrate it entirely to thy service. Confirm me, O, Lord! in my good purpose.

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## FRIDAY

IN THE THIRD WEEK OF LENT.

GOSPEL.—*John* iv. 5-41.

*At that time:* Jesus came to a city of Samaria which is called Sichar; near the land which Jacob gave to his son Joseph. Now Jacob's well was there. Jesus, therefore, being wearied with his journey, sat thus on the well. It was about the sixth hour.—There cometh a woman of Samaria to draw water. Jesus saith to her: Give me to drink. (For his disciples were gone into the city to buy meats.) Then

that Samaritan woman saith to him : How dost thou, being a Jew, ask of me to drink, who am a Samaritan woman ? For the Jews do not communicate with the Samaritans. Jesus answered, and said unto her : If thou didst know the gift of God, and who he is that saith to thee, give me to drink ; thou perhaps wouldst have asked of him, and he would have given thee living water. The woman saith to him : Sir, thou hast nothing wherein to draw, and the well is deep : from whence then hast thou living water ? Art thou greater than our father Jacob, who gave us the well, and drank thereof himself, and his children, and his cattle ? Jesus answered and said to her : Whosoever drinketh of this water shall thirst again : but he that shall drink of the water that I will give him, shall not thirst forever. But the water that I shall give him, shall become in him a fountain of water springing up into life everlasting. The woman saith to him : Sir, give me this water, that I may not thirst, nor come hither to draw. Jesus saith to her : Go, call thy husband, and come hither. The woman answered, and saith : I have no husband. Jesus saith to her : Thou hast said well, I have no husband : for thou hast had five husbands : and he whom thou now hast, is not thy husband. This thou hast said truly. The woman saith to him : Sir, I

perceive that thou art a prophet. Our fathers adored on this mountain, and you say, that at Jerusalem is the place where men must adore. Jesus saith to her: Woman, believe me, the hour cometh, when you shall neither on this mountain, nor in Jerusalem, adore the Father. You adore that which you know not; we adore that which we know: for salvation is of the Jews. But the hour cometh, and now is, when the true adorers shall adore the Father in spirit and in truth. For the Father also seeketh such to adore him. God is a Spirit, and they that adore him, must adore him in spirit and in truth. The woman saith to him: I know that the Messias cometh (who is called Christ) therefore when he is come, he will tell us all things. Jesus saith to her: I am he, who am speaking with thee. And immediately his disciples came: and they wondered that he talked with the woman. Yet no man said: What seekest thou, or why talkest thou with her? The woman therefore left her water-pot, and went her way into the city, and saith to the men there: Come, and see a man who hath told me all things whatsoever I have done. Is not he the Christ? They went therefore out of the city, and came unto him. In the meantime the disciples prayed him, saying: Rabbi, eat. But he said to them: I have meat to eat which

you know not. The disciples therefore said one to another: Hath any man brought him to eat? Jesus saith to them: My meat is to do the will of him that sent me, that I may perfect his work. Do not you say, there are yet four months, and then the harvest cometh? Behold I say to you, lift up your eyes, and see the countries, for they are white already to harvest. And he that reapeth receiveth wages, and gathereth fruit unto life everlasting: that both he that soweth, and he that reapeth may rejoice together. For in this is that saying true: that it is one man that soweth, and it is another that reapeth. I have sent you to reap that in which you did not labor: others have labored, and you have entered into their labors. Now of that city many of the Samaritans believed in him, for the word of the woman giving testimony: he told me all things whatsoever I have done. So when the Samaritans were come to him, they desired him that he would tarry there. And he abode there two days. And many more believed in him because of his own word. And they said to the woman: We now believe, not for thy saying: for we ourselves have seen him, and know that he is indeed the Saviour of the world.

## INSTRUCTION.

THE miracles of nature which our blessed Saviour wrought, by curing the sick, and the lame; by restoring sight to the blind; and raising those to life who were dead: being not less surprising than those of grace, and mercy shown in the conversion of sinners, sufficiently prove the sincere, the ardent desire he had, that all should be saved, that none should perish. But never did the mercy of the Son of God shine with greater luster, than in the conversion of the Samaritan woman, as related in this day's gospel. He enters into conversation with her, and by his manner of reproaching her for her criminal course of life, in telling her all she had done, he wrought in her a sincere conversion.

There is this difference to be observed between the *miracles of nature*, and those of *grace*. The first, are the *sole* effects of the power of God, without any concurrence on our parts. The second, are the effects of *his goodness*, but which require the *co-operation of our will*. God is, indeed, the principal agent, who gives us his grace, and man co-operates by his will.

Our blessed Lord desired the conversion of the Samaritan woman. For that reason he sat

down by the well, where he knew she would come to draw water. He gave her a knowledge of the deplorable state she was in. He inspired her with a sincere desire of being converted : this is his mode of proceeding with all sinners. He searches after them ; he calls upon them publicly by the ministers of his word ; he speaks to them in private by the checks of their own conscience, and the inspirations of his Holy Spirit. He searches after them in all those favorable occasions he gives them of being converted, and by that patience with which he waits for their return. He sets before them the enormity of their crimes, the punishments due to them, and the absolute necessity of repentance to prevent their being eternally lost. Thus he fills them with a holy fear, and a desire of obtaining the means of salvation : hence they conceive a horror of their past sins, and being more enlightened, by receiving greater degrees of grace, they detest their sins, not only as prejudicial to themselves, but as odious, offensive and displeasing to God. Thus by a sincere conversion, and an entire change of life and manners, we behold them restored from the slavery of sin to the glorious liberty of the sons of God. These are the ordinary means whereby God rescues sinners from the imminent danger of falling into the



pit of everlasting perdition. It is, however, necessary that we should co-operate in the accomplishment of these merciful designs of God : for, although he has made us without our consent, yet he will not save us unless to the consent of the will we unite our own sincere endeavors. The sinner then that would be saved, must, *first*, be sorry for, and humbly confess his sins. *Secondly*, he must not only desist from committing sin, but even from every occasion that may lead to the commission of it. *Thirdly*, he must persevere in the constant practise of virtue and piety. Unless sinners therefore imitate the conduct of the Samaritan woman in these respects, in vain do they flatter themselves with the hope of salvation. In order to obtain the pardon of our sins, it is but just and reasonable that we should humbly confess them. When those from whom we have received an offense ask for pardon, and a reconciliation with us, do we not expect, that besides an humble acknowledgment of the fault, they would also express a sincere sorrow for having offended us? Can we then, reasonably expect the forgiveness of our sins from God, unless we confess them with a sincere sorrow? Can we be sorry for them, if we be not firmly resolved never to repeat them? Can such resolutions be sincere, if we do not avoid

the occasions of sin? To a true confession, therefore, some other conditions are requisite besides a bare acknowledgment of our sins. The most infallible criterion whereby we may prove the sincerity of our conversion is, a total change of life and manners. We must no longer admire the world, nor suffer ourselves to be governed by its false maxims: we must quit the paths of pride and vanity, and be no longer enslaved by our criminal passions: we must crucify the flesh with its concupiscences, and govern ourselves by the rules of the gospel. In a word, we must endeavor to be able to say with the apostle, *I live, yet not I, but Christ liveth in me.* (Gal. ii.) By a constant perseverance in this happy change of life, we shall correspond with the merciful designs of God in conferring his grace upon us, and entitle ourselves to the promised reward.

These precautions will secure us against relapsing into sin, a state of all others the most to be dreaded, on account of the extreme hazard we run that God will withdraw his grace from us, and abandon us forever. A person who values his health, after having recovered from a dangerous fit of sickness, will not be easily persuaded to do that which might occasion a relapse, and terminate in his death: and shall one who has any regard for the salvation of his

soul, after having, through the grace of God, recovered from the leprosy of sin, by a wilful relapse, incur the danger of losing it forever? O, let us not then receive the grace of God in vain ! but by faithfully co-operating therewith, secure to ourselves his favor in this life, and eternal happiness in the next.

## PRAYER.

MOST merciful Redeemer ! how frequently hast thou called me, and how long hast thou expected my return ! O, suffer me not to remain any longer deaf to thy bountiful invitation. I desire, O, my God ! to return to thee by repentance and by a sincere conversion, to quit those sinful paths wherein I have so long wandered from thee the fountain of life. This desire, O, Lord, is the effect of thy grace. Perfect then, I beseech thee, the work thou hast begun ; grant, O, my God ! that I may not only utterly abhor my past sins, but also, by avoiding every occasion of sin for the time to come, make it my particular study to advance daily in the road to perfection, and persevere to the end in thy service. I acknowledge, with gratitude, my infinite obligations for the mercies thou hast shown me, and purpose to make the best return of which I am capable. I am

resolved rather to suffer death, than ever more offend thee. Rather than cease to be thine, or to love anything more than thee, let me fall into my original state of annihilation.

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## SATURDAY

IN THE THIRD WEEK OF LENT.

GOSPEL.—*John viii. 1-11.*

*At that time :* Jesus went to Mount Olivet. and early in the morning he came again into the temple, and all the people came to him, and sitting down he taught them. And the Scribes and Pharisees bring unto him a woman taken in adultery ; and they set her in the midst, and said to him : Master, this woman was even now taken in adultery. Now Moses in the law commanded us to stone such a one. But what sayest thou ? And this they said tempting him, that they might accuse him. But Jesus bowing himself down, wrote with his finger on the ground. When therefore they continued asking him, he lifted up himself, and said to them : He that is without sin among you, let him first cast a stone at her. And again stooping down, he wrote on the ground.

But they, hearing this, went out one by one, beginning at the eldest, and Jesus alone remained, and the woman standing in the midst. Then Jesus lifting up himself, said to her: Woman, where are they that accused thee? Hath no man condemned thee? Who said: No man, Lord. And Jesus said: Neither will I condemn thee. Go, and now sin no more.

#### INSTRUCTION.

BEHOLD the unaccountable obstinacy and malice of the Scribes and Pharisees! Notwithstanding the many evident miracles our blessed Saviour had wrought among the Jews; notwithstanding his innocent life, and heavenly doctrine, they not only refused to believe in him, but sought on all occasions to persecute and revile him; to speak evil of him, traduce him as a seducer of the people, and a violator of the law of Moses. Desiring to have some specious pretext to proceed against him, they brought before him a woman caught in adultery, saying, that the law required that she should be stoned to death. The Son of God perceiving the malicious designs of these wicked hypocrites, put them to confusion, by ordering him who among them was without sin, to cast the first stone. Mortified at this severe, but

just reproach, and unable to withstand the accusations of their own consciences, they went out of the temple, and left the woman alone with our Saviour, who bid her depart in peace, and sin no more. But our blessed Lord in refusing to condemn this woman, did not justify her crime, or declare her guiltless. He reproved the Pharisees for their malice and hypocrisy, whilst by his clemency, he wrought the conversion of a sinner.

Besides their malicious intention of ensnaring our Saviour by this question, the conduct of those pretended zealots, proved them to be void of all compassion for the unfortunate offender. They exposed her in the temple, and publicly declared her crime. Though she deserved the sentence pronounced by God in the law against such criminals, yet they were totally unqualified to become her accusers: for, although a zeal to suppress vice and immorality, and to punish public, and scandalous offenders, be not only a laudable, but an incumbent duty on those to whom the execution of the laws are committed, yet, it is generally expected that they themselves, should not give any cause of suspicion of being guilty of the crimes they condemn in the persons of others. A drunkard, a blasphemer or one who frequents forbidden places, is a very improper

person to accuse, correct, or punish others for drunkenness, swearing, or debauchery.

We learn from the answer of Christ to the Pharisees, that we should be as lenient with the faults of our neighbor, as is consistent with justice and truth. Our zeal for his correction must be always directed by charity, which will teach us to cover his failings, and not expose them to the world. But should they be of a nature too public and notorious to be concealed, yet should the spirit of charity make us extenuate them as much as possible, since we are ignorant how far chance, inadvertence, sudden surprise, or weakness, may have been the occasion of his fall. Even the crimes of public and notorious sinners, ought not to be exaggerated, nor exposed, till duty to the community calls for a just and public complaint, which must be always accompanied with pity and compassion for the person of the offender. *He that is without sin among you, let him first cast a stone at her*, said the merciful Jesus to the pretendedly zealous Pharisees. When we are innocent of a crime of which we see another guilty, we may then exercise our charity in reprehending him, and our charitable reproofs may perhaps be successful. But if we are equally guilty, with what face can we reprove, judge, and condemn him? He will have too much reason to reply,

*Physician cure thyself. Thou who teachest another, teachest not thyself: who preachest not to steal, and stealest: who sayest men must not commit adultery, yet committest it.* There is but little good to be expected from the reprehensions, or admonitions of such persons, since the judgment they pass upon others is a just condemnation of themselves, which involves them in the guilt and punishment of the Pharisees, who upon our Saviour's reply, went out of the temple one by one and left the woman with Christ and his disciples, who would not condemn her, but bade her go and sin no more. The goodness and mercy of our blessed Redeemer had so happy an effect on the adulteress, that, according to the opinion of the holy fathers and commentators, she was thereby sincerely converted. Similar condescension on our parts may produce similar effects. A seasonable mercy has often reclaimed those, on whom severity could never operate.

Another useful instruction may be drawn from this gospel, that into whatever grievous sins we may behold others fall, we must not therefore despise them, or be elated ourselves. Such persons require our pity, and our prayers; from their misfortunes we ought to learn to take care that we do not fall into greater crimes; and, that if we do not, it is not owing to our-



selves, but to the grace of God, which can easily convert them, and from grievous sinners make them greater saints, like Mary Magdalen. Whilst on the other hand, those who have fairly started on the road to holiness, may by pride, and too great a confidence in themselves become great sinners. Judas from an apostle became an apostate, and betrayed his Master. From the moment we think ourselves secure, we may date the commencement of our fall. We can find no security but in the grace of God, for which we must daily pray, saying *lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from evil*. We must carefully improve and faithfully co-operate with the grace of God, *that by good works we may make our calling and election sure*.

## PRAYER.

O, COMPASSIONATE Saviour of sinners! who wouldst not condemn the woman caught in adultery, but didst bid her depart and sin no more, have the same mercy and compassion on me. Do not condemn me, dear Lord! though I am a grievous sinner. May thy grace work a perfect change in my heart; may I never more offend thee. But whilst I thus implore thy clemency for myself, let me be merciful to my neighbor. Inspire me with compassion

for him, that I may put a charitable construction upon his failings, and have a sincere zeal for the good of his soul; that I may endeavor to reclaim him from sin, by tenderness to his person, and pity for his weakness. Inspire me also, O, Lord! with an humble diffidence in my own strength, that I may place my whole confidence in thee. May thy grace preserve me, but if through weakness I should fall, do thou mercifully raise me, that I may learn to walk more carefully hereafter.

Alas! my God, I am convinced that of myself, I am nothing but misery and weakness: continually relapsing into those follies of which I so often repent and accuse myself. Have pity on me, O, merciful Saviour of the world! Thou only true Physician of my sick and wounded soul! speak but the word, Lord, and I shall be healed. Say to me: *go in peace*; and, O, may I never more wilfully offend thee! Let thy powerful grace preserve me from all occasions of sin: that thou mayest be glorified in thy mercy, and that I may live only to love and serve thee.

## MONDAY

## IN THE FOURTH WEEK OF LENT.

GOSPEL.—*John* ii. 13-25.

*At that time :* The pasch of the Jews was at hand, and Jesus went up to Jerusalem, and he found in the temple them that sold oxen, and sheep, and doves, and the changers of money sitting. And when he had made as it were a scourge of little cords, he drove them all out of the temple, the sheep also and the oxen, and the money of the changers he poured out, and the tables he overthrew. And to them that sold doves he said: Take these things hence, and make not the house of my Father a house of traffic. And his disciples remembered that it was written: "The zeal of thy house hath eaten me up." The Jews therefore answered, and said to him: What sign dost thou show us, seeing thou dost these things? Jesus answered, and said to them: Destroy this temple, and in three days I will raise it up. The Jews then said: Six and forty years was this temple in building, and wilt thou raise it in three days? But he spoke of the temple of his body. When therefore he was risen again

from the dead, his disciples remembered that he had said this, and they believed the scripture, and the word that Jesus had said. Now when he was at Jerusalem, at the pasch, upon the festival day, many believed in his name, seeing his signs which he did. But Jesus did not trust himself to them, for he knew all men, and because he needed not that any should give testimony of man, for he knew what was in man.

#### INSTRUCTION.

THE substance of this gospel is the same as that which was read on Tuesday in the first week of Lent; it informs us that our blessed Lord drove the buyers and sellers out of the temple. In the reflections we then made, we took occasion to censure the irreverent behavior of many Christians in our churches, who by profaning those sacred places, convert the temple of the living God into a den of thieves, by depriving him of that honor which is peculiarly his. But in our reflections on this gospel, we shall take the profanation of another kind of temple into consideration, viz. our bodies, the "*temples of the Holy Ghost*," which we too frequently profane by sin, and convert into places of worldly traffic and commerce,

more especially since this exposition is conformable to that of our Saviour, when he called his body *a temple*. Every Christian then is the *temple of God*, wherein he resides by grace: our hearts are so many altars, on which the fire of divine charity ought incessantly to burn, whereon all inordinate passions should be consumed in a continual sacrifice: these mystical temples are therefore no less houses of prayer, than churches: the latter being a figure and representation of the former; if then the profanation of the *material temple*, by an unworthy traffic and commerce, was so great a crime in the Jews, as to excite the indignation of the meek and merciful Jesus, we have no reason to doubt but the profanation of the *spiritual temples of Christians*, is much more criminal, and that God will drive all such as are guilty thereof, from his temple, the heavenly Jerusalem, into which *no unclean thing shall ever enter*.

As the inspired apostle calls our bodies temples of the Holy Ghost, so the Holy Spirit positively declares, that *he will not dwell in a body subject to sin*. If Christians made this the subject of their serious consideration, it would prevent many of those abuses which so frequently expose our holy religion to shame and opprobrious censure: some of these I shall notice, that as Lent is a time set apart

for purifying those *mystical temples* from all abuses and profanations, we may, if we have by sin unhappily driven the Holy Spirit from us, by a *sincere repentance and amendment*, invite him to return again.

Among the scandalous pollutions of these spiritual temples, impurity may be placed in the first rank, as a sin the most odious, and detestable of all others in the sight of God, who being essentially holy and pure, must necessarily hold it in the utmost detestation. Alas! how many thousands, after having been redeemed by the blood of Jesus, are now burning in hell for their impurities? There are several degrees of this sin, but the smallest is such a profanation as is sufficient to expel the Holy Spirit from us. If a lustful thought consented to; a pollution voluntarily committed; an unchaste desire conceived, be sufficient to turn those mystical houses of God into *dens of thieves*, what can be said of those, who give themselves up to the habit of impurity; whose thoughts are continually ruminating upon, and whose eyes are searching after forbidden objects; whose entertainments consist in immodest songs and books; and whose conversations are replete with words of a double meaning? What can be said of those, who abandon themselves to the criminal act, and blush not

to live in an open practise of debauchery? Alas! the vain excuse of human frailty, will serve as no plea, to exempt them from suffering under the severest effects of the indignation of God. The criminal passions they here indulge, will serve as fuel to feed those eternal flames of hell, wherewith they will be tormented hereafter.

These mystical temples are also often profaned by the passions of anger, hatred, malice, and envy. The moment we give way to these sins, the Holy Ghost no longer remains in us. As he is a Spirit of charity, and peace, we ought to give daily proofs of his dwelling in our hearts, by the practise of these Christian virtues; to behold a Christian transported with anger, uttering imprecations against his neighbor, seeking occasions of revenge, refusing to pardon the least injury, speaking ill of his neighbor, repining at the good fortune of another, and never content, but continually murmuring at his own lot, is so manifest a violation of the temple of God, that we may safely venture to affirm the Holy Ghost does not reside therein, and that such as abuse the house of God by such sins shall be cast out of his heavenly mansions. If these passions fill the world with so much animosity, and hell with innumerable souls, shall we think them

of little or no consequence? Ah, let us not thus unhappily deceive ourselves!

There is another manner of profaning the temple of God, and changing it into a den of thieves by an inordinate solicitude to procure the things of this world, whilst we neglect the means to obtain *the one thing necessary*, viz., *the salvation of our souls*. From the absence of serious reflection, this evil is almost universal. Those who are neither enslaved by impurity, anger, passion, or any other open and criminal disorder, do nevertheless violate his holy place by a criminal neglect of God, and their own salvation, as well as by an inordinate attachment to the riches, honors and enjoyments of this world.

Ah! is not this unbecoming the character of a Christian? Is it not degenerating from the dignity of being *sons of God*, and becoming slaves to the world, his enemy? Is it not turning his house into a place of traffic, wherein we make the wretched bargain of exchanging heaven for earth, bartering the happiness of an eternal kingdom, for the uncertain, the transitory pleasures of a few moments, (for such is time compared to eternity :) so that our interest, no less than our duty, should oblige us not to profane the temples of God. Thus every sin may be said to be *the abomination of desolation*



*standing in the holy place* ; a sign of impending ruin, unless prevented by repentance and amendment. To this we are called at this holy season, and if we refuse to comply, we shall certainly regret our folly when it is too late to apply the remedy for reconciliation.

## PRAYER.

O, GOD of infinite purity and holiness ! thou hast consecrated my heart as a temple wherein thou delightest to reside : let me never profane thy holy sanctuary by impure or unlawful desires, nor expel thee therefrom by inordinate passions. Ah, my God ! shall I ever be so unfortunate as to barter the happiness of enjoying thee for anything this world can produce : far be such a thought from me, as the most precious treasure in the universe cannot be put in competition with thee : all my endeavors shall be to please thee : I will be careful to preserve the temple of my heart pure and undefiled. I will cast out from thence all inordinate affections, and whatever is displeasing to thee. O, may my heart be cleansed by thy holy grace from the sordid love of creatures, that thou mayest delight to make it thy dwelling-place !

O, divine Spirit of purity, and holiness ! who has declared thou wilt not dwell in a body sub-

ject to sin, and hast consecrated my body and soul as a living temple to thee, come and take up thy residence, and purify me by thy grace. O, may I never profane my heart by the worship of the idols of a sinful and worldly love, nor drive thee from it by the traffic of impure and unlawful affections. May the flame of a most pure and holy love of thee, ever remain unextinguished on the altar of my heart. May all worldly and inordinate affections be totally consumed in my soul, that thou alone mayest reign therein. O, thou pure and chaste Spouse ! let me never be unfaithful to thee. May I live and die in thee, and remain inseparably united to thee for all eternity.

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## TUESDAY

IN THE FOURTH WEEK OF LENT.

GOSPEL.—*John* vii. 14-31.

*At that time ;* About the midst of the feast, Jesus went up into the temple and taught. And the Jews wondered, saying: How doth this man know letters, having never learned? Jesus answered them, and said: My doctrine is not mine, but his that sent me. If any

man will do the will of him, he shall know of the doctrine whether it be of God, or whether I speak of myself. He that speaketh of himself, seeketh his own glory : but he that seeketh the glory of him that sent him, he is true, and there is no injustice in him. Did not Moses give you the law ? and yet none of you keepeth the law. Why seek you to kill me ? The multitude answered and said : Thou hast a devil. Who seeketh to kill thee ? Jesus answered, and said to them : One work I have done : and you all wonder, therefore Moses gave you circumcision : (not because it is of Moses, but of the fathers) and on the Sabbath-day you circumcise a man. If a man receive circumcision on the Sabbath-day that the law of Moses may not be broken ; are you angry at me because I have healed the whole man on the Sabbath-day ? Judge not according to the appearance, but judge just judgment. Some therefore of Jerusalem said : Is not this he whom they seek to kill ? And behold he speaketh openly, and they say nothing to him. Have the rulers known for a truth that this is the Christ ? But we know this man whence he is ; but when the Christ cometh, no man knoweth whence he is. Jesus therefore cried out in the temple, teaching and saying : You both know me, and you know whence I am : and I

am not come of myself ; but he that sent me is true, whom you know not. I know him, because I am from him and he hath sent me. They sought therefore to apprehend him : and no man laid hands on him, because his hour was not yet come. But of the people many believed in him.

#### INSTRUCTION.

OUR blessed Saviour cured a man who had been afflicted with a palsy eight and thirty years ; the Jews, instead of acknowledging the wonderful miracle, and confessing him to be their Messias, traduced him as a Sabbath-breaker, and one who had violated the law of Moses. They could not call the miracle in question, for the sick man's taking up his bed and walking, was a demonstrative proof, but gave it a malicious turn, by finding fault with its being done on the Sabbath-day, and represented him as one who had violated the precepts of the law. Christ, with his accustomed mildness, endeavored to correct their malicious inference, by desiring them not to judge according to appearance, but to give a just decision. This advice is no less applicable to Christians than to Jews. It is one of the most prevailing disorders amongst the followers

of Jesus Christ, to pass rash judgments upon their neighbors, and censure their actions according to the light wherein they behold them. As a remedy for this evil, we must attend to the advice of our blessed Lord, we must judge according to equity and truth; for which, three things are requisite: *first, authority* to pass sentence; *secondly, a thorough knowledge* of the case; *thirdly, an upright intention*, devoid of passion, envy, or prejudice. Where these conditions are wanting, our judgments will be found rash and criminal, like that which the Jews passed upon our divine Redeemer.

In the first place, we decide *without authority*, which, properly speaking, belongs to God, for he only has a *right* to judge; it is his peculiar prerogative, which we must neither intrude upon nor usurp, for this obvious reason, that we are equally brethren, and the servants of one great Master. Hence the great apostle says: *Who art thou that judgest another man's servant*. No one then can have any jurisdiction over him but God, or the powers established by God; for what is here said of our not having authority to judge our neighbor, must be only understood of private persons with respect to each other, since those vested with public authority, given them by God, whose place they hold, may and ought to judge, con

demn, reprove, and correct the actions of those under their jurisdiction. This is necessary for the good of society ; as without it order would be lost in anarchy and confusion.

We are generally wanting in a *thorough knowledge* of what we decide upon : this is manifest by our frequently judging of the substance of things by their *appearance* : but there is a considerable difference between the semblance and the reality. When God sent Samuel to elect David in the place of Saul, he bid him not to judge of the sons of Jesse *by their looks and outward appearances*. By not observing the same caution, we frequently condemn what is praiseworthy, and commend what is deserving of censure. Another proof of our want of knowledge is, that uncertain rule, whereby we judge of our *neighbor's intention* by his actions : as the motives for one and the same action may be very different, so it may be done by several persons for different purposes : nor can any one know the intention of another but God alone, who beholds the secrets of all hearts. If we must judge of the intention, let it be always for the best, and then we run no risk ; for, if we should be mistaken, it will prove but an innocent error : a want of knowledge is displayed when we give judgment upon reports without examination : to proceed thus, is

to place ourselves under the necessity of often judging rashly, which is a sure sign of great ignorance or consummate malice.

To pass a just sentence, is, to judge with an *upright intention*, devoid of passion, envy, or prejudice: but alas! how often do we fail! how frequently does interest, humor, or inclination, direct our judgments! Our private opinions are often biased by inclination, or aversion. If we have esteem for another, all he says or does is right: if not, all is wrong, and even his very virtues are censured as faults: if devout, he is styled a hypocrite; if sober and frugal, he is called covetous: if generous and liberal, he is termed a prodigal. Being thus incapable of judging as we ought, how dare we venture to condemn others, since we have no authority for so doing, and lack the knowledge and integrity necessary to avoid mistakes? If we must exercise judgment, let us cite *ourselves* to the bar, since we are authorized to do so; and having a sufficient knowledge of our own sins and imperfections, we stand in no danger of being unjust to ourselves. This will be to our advantage; for we are assured by the apostle, that if we judge and condemn ourselves now, we shall not be judged and condemned hereafter. As to our neighbor, if we must judge him, let it be

always favorably, and not rashly. "*Judge not, says Christ, that you may not be judged; for with what judgment you judge you shall be judged: and with what measure you mete, it shall be measured to you again.*"

PRAYER.

O, JESUS, the sovereign Judge of mankind! who also hast authority, and dost judge in equity and righteousness, preserve me by thy grace from judging rashly of my neighbor; that giving a charitable construction to his words and actions, I may expect compassion from thee. I stand every moment in need, O, Lord! of mercy from thee, having so often provoked thy justice. Thy pity is what I now humbly pray for, and O, let me never more presume to usurp thy prerogative; *to judge and condemn others*. Let me rather turn my eyes upon myself, and behold my own weakness and imperfections, that I may learn to cast the veil of charity over those of my neighbors. I will leave them, O, Lord, to thee, to whom alone they are accountable. Thou hast commanded me to *be merciful, as thou thyself art merciful*: and that I should *do unto others, as I would they should do unto me*. Let this be the sole rule of my conduct towards



my neighbors, that I may never injure them, nor offend thee.

O, my God! it is my sincere desire and firm purpose ever to observe this excellent rule; to follow the example which thou, O, merciful Jesus! hast left me. I stand in daily need of thy mercy and goodness, and shall I be unmerciful to my neighbor? No, my God! I will endeavor to be merciful, as thou, my heavenly Father, art merciful. I will think ill of no one, but will judge most favorably of all. Charity shall direct my thoughts, guide my words, and regulate all my actions. Thus, by endeavoring to prove myself thy true disciple, O, Jesus! I may hope to find mercy and acceptance with thee.

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## WEDNESDAY

IN THE FOURTH WEEK OF LENT.

GOSPEL.—*John ix.* 1-38.

*At that time:* Jesus passing by, saw a man who was blind from his birth; and his disciples asked him: Rabbi, who hath sinned, this man, or his parents, that he should be born blind? Jesus answered: Neither hath this man sinned, nor his parents; but that

the works of God should be made manifest in him. I must work the works of him that sent me, whilst it is day : the night cometh when no man can work. As long as I am in the world, I am the light of the world. When he had said these things, he spat on the ground, and made clay of the spittle, and spread the clay upon his eyes, and said to him : Go, wash in the pool of Siloe, which is interpreted, Sent. He went his way therefore, and washed, and he came seeing. The neighbors therefore, and they who had seen him before, that he was a beggar, said : Is not this he that sat and begged ? Some said : This is he. But others said : No, but he is like him. But he said : I am he. They said therefore to him : How were thy eyes opened ? He answered : That man that is called Jesus, made clay, and anointed my eyes, and said to me : Go to the pool of Siloe, and wash. And I went, I washed, and I see. And they said to him : Where is he ? He saith : I know not. They bring him that had been blind to the Pharisees. Now it was the Sabbath, when Jesus made the clay, and opened his eyes. Again therefore the Pharisees asked him how he had received his sight. But he said to them : He put clay upon my eyes, and I washed, and I see. Some therefore of the Pharisees said : This man is

not of God, who keepeth not the Sabbath. But others said: How can a man that is a sinner do such miracles? And there was a division among them. They say therefore to the blind man again: What sayest thou of him that hath opened thy eyes? And he said: He is a prophet. The Jews then did not believe concerning him, that he had been blind, and had received his sight, until they called the parents of him that had received his sight, and asked them, saying: Is this your son who you say was born blind? How then doth he now see? His parents answered them, and said: We know that this is our son, and that he was born blind: but how he now seeth, we know not: or who hath opened his eyes we know not: ask himself; he is of age; let him speak for himself. These things his parents said, because they feared the Jews: for the Jews had already agreed among themselves, that if any man should confess him to be Christ, he should be put out of the synagogue. Therefore did his parents say: He is of age, ask him. They therefore called the man again that had been blind, and said to him: Give glory to God, we know that this man is a sinner. He said therefore to them: If he be a sinner, I know not: one thing I know, that whereas I was blind, now I see.

They said then to him : What did he to thee ? How did he open thy eyes ? He answered them : I have told you already, and you have heard : why would you hear it again ? will you also become his disciples ? They reviled him, therefore, and said : Be thou his disciple ; but we are the disciples of Moses. We know that God spoke to Moses : but as to this man, we know not from whence he is. The man answered, and said to them : Why, herein is a wonderful thing, that you know not from whence he is, and he hath opened my eyes. Now we know that God doth not hear sinners ; but if a man be a server of God, and doth his will, him he heareth. From the beginning of the world it hath not been heard, that any man hath opened the eyes of one born blind. Unless this man were of God, he could not do anything. They answered and said to him : Thou was wholly born in sins, and dost thou teach us ? And they cast him out. Jesus heard that they had cast him out ; and when he had found him, he said to him : Dost thou believe in the Son of God ? He answered, and said : Who is he, Lord, that I may believe in him ? And Jesus said to him : Thou hast both seen him : and it is he that talketh with thee. And he said : I believe, Lord. And falling down, he adored him.

## INSTRUCTION.

IT is not without reason that corporal blindness is considered as one of the greatest misfortunes that can befall a man; as a person in that melancholy situation is not only unable to help himself, but is moreover deprived of the greatest part of the innocent pleasures and comforts of life. But however deserving of compassion such a person may appear, the condition of those who are spiritually blind is infinitely worse, and more deserving of pity. The number of the former is small when compared with that of the latter; for without mentioning those who have been spiritually blind from their birth, by having had the misfortune never to come to the knowledge of God, and the true faith, we shall find the number of those to be almost infinite, who notwithstanding their belief in Jesus Christ, and profession of the Catholic faith, are yet afflicted with spiritual blindness. If it be a work of charity to assist those who are corporally blind to recover their sight, must it not be much more so, to endeavor to open the eyes of those who are spiritually blind: for which purpose, let us consider the causes and effects of this mental disorder and offer some

remedies for its cure, after having first compared the blindness of the mind with that of the heart.

There are three things naturally prejudicial to the eyes, which deprive a man of his sight. First, *Smoke*, which by drying up the necessary moisture of the optic nerves, weakens their virtue, and gradually takes from a man the faculty of seeing. Second, *Fire*, which produces the same effects, but in a more rapid and sensible manner. Third, *Dust*, which blinds his eyes. Now the darkness of the heart may be ascribed to similar causes, for what can honors and dignities be more aptly compared to than smoke, and it is for this reason they are styled in scripture, *vanity of vanities*. (Eccles. i.) Like smoke, they raise a thick dark cloud, through which nothing can be seen, and although they soon evaporate and pass away, nevertheless it is a smoke of so malignant a nature, as to deprive the mind of sight, and cause a spiritual blindness. Wherefore whoever permits his heart to be attached to them, will become so blind, as to be unable to find his way to heaven. Would to God, that the numbers of such blind Christians were inconsiderable. But alas! when we behold the generality of them so excessively fond of parade and show,—so much addicted to pride, and high and expensive living, we cannot

but pronounce them blind, and insensible of their sad misfortune.

But if material fire be a thing which destroys corporal sight, there is another kind of fire which produces a blindness of the heart ; viz : the fire of lust and concupiscence. A person addicted to sinful pleasure, and a loose way of life, soon becomes so spiritually blind, as to be unable to see either God or himself. Nor is the effect which is caused by dust less prejudicial to the eyes of the body, than that which blinds the sight of the soul : for what is it, but an immoderate desire of riches,—the trouble and fatigue of amassing them, and an anxiety to preserve them, that renders the covetous man blind to everything else ? He is blind to the necessities of the poor ; he can neither see to relieve their wants, nor even discern how to make a right use of his own riches. Thus having lost the sight of his mind, he vainly imagines himself happy in his possessions, whilst he is, of all other men, the most miserable.

Having explored the fatal causes of spiritual blindness, let us now consider its deplorable effects. What can be more deserving of our compassion than to behold a man, who has lost his sight, constantly straying out of his way ; frequently falling and unable to assist himself. So, what can be more deplorable than to be-

hold the continual errors and mistakes of a sinner spiritually blind. He knows not whither he is going,—where he would go,—or what he would be at. He exhausts and fatigues himself by walking in rough and craggy ways, which terminate in frightful precipices, and fill his soul with a mortal inquietude. Hearken to the eloquent description which the wise man gives of his situation: *We are wearied in the paths of iniquity and perdition, and have walked in difficult ways.* (Wisd. v.) Ah yes, this is the sad state of every blind sinner, from which nothing can extricate him but the powerful grace of God, which will never be refused him, when he prays for it as he ought. His case, though bad, is not altogether desperate. He may recover his sight, and be cured of his spiritual blindness, if he will but apply the proper remedies, and have recourse to Jesus, the true physician of souls.

Let him imitate the conduct of the blind man in the gospel, and put himself in the way by which Jesus is to pass. He must be careful not to quit this course, or in other words, he must remain constant in the profession of the Catholic Faith; for if he departs therefrom, there remains no hope for him. As the blind man cried aloud to our Saviour to have pity on him, so a sinner must cry out aloud by prayer,



and beg for mercy of God. Christ made clay, with his spittle, of the dust, and put it upon the blind man's eyes; from this we may learn, that the consideration of our origin, from the dust of the earth, ought to withdraw our hearts from those vanities, which, by their dust blind our sight. The Son of God commanded the blind man to go and wash in the pool of Siloe, by which is understood the wholesome waters of penance, in the sacrament of confession, wherein the greatest sinner may wash away his sins, and, together with his spiritual sight, recover the grace and favor of God.

## PRAYER.

JESUS! the true and efficient light which enlightens every man that comes into the world! preserve me from all spiritual blindness: let not the smoke of worldly honors prevent me from seeing the way wherein I must follow thee, through the paths of humility, and self-denial: suffer not the fire of unlawful desires to deprive me of my spiritual sight. Thou hast said: *Blessed are the clean of heart, for they shall see God.* Preserve, then, my heart pure and clean, that I may have the happiness to behold thee: let not the sordid dust of earthly riches cause me to wander from the true road, which leads

to thy heavenly kingdom ; or, if I have unhappily lost my way, may thy holy grace recall me : let the light of thy Holy Spirit shine upon me. Dissipate all darkness, that I may not only see and know thee, my God ! but that, also beholding myself, I may have immediate recourse to thee, the true physician of our souls.

O, divine Jesus ! compassionate Redeemer of souls, speak but the word and I shall be healed. Touch the eyes of my soul with thy all-powerful finger, that I may be delivered from that spiritual darkness under which I have so long labored. To obtain this I will go to the pool of Siloe, to the salutary waters of true contrition and penance, and with a contrite heart I will cry out : *Who will give water to my head, and a fountain of tears to my eyes, and I will day and night bewail my misery and wretchedness caused by sin : for, an humble and contrite heart, O, God, thou wilt not despise.*

## THURSDAY

IN THE FOURTH WEEK OF LENT.

GOSPEL.—*Luke* vii. 11-16.

*At that time :* Jesus went into a city called Naim : and there went with him his disciples, and a great multitude. And when he came nigh to the gate of the city, behold a dead man was carried out, the only son of his mother ; and she was a widow : and a great multitude of the city was with her. Whom when the Lord had seen, being moved with mercy towards her, he said to her : Weep not. And he came near and touched the bier. And they that carried it, stood still. And he said : Young man, I say to thee, arise. And he that was dead, sat up, and began to speak. And he delivered him to his mother. And there came a fear on them all : and they glorified God, saying : A great prophet is risen up amongst us, and God hath visited his people.

### INSTRUCTION.

THAT we must die, is a certain truth, confirmed by experience, and however, infidels,

heretics, and libertines may deny, ridicule and turn every other article of our holy faith into a jest, they must agree with us in subscribing to this serious truth, that *we must all die*. Ah ! yes, our souls must one day be separated from our bodies ; we shall be taken from all we now see and enjoy in this world ; our bodies must be laid in the cold grave, there to be devoured by worms ; reduced to that original dust from which we are formed, whilst our souls are doomed to endless happiness, or eternal misery. This is the irrevocable decree passed upon all the sons of Adam. We may, indeed, make a bustle in this world : we may move about in splendor, and dazzle the eyes of those who behold us by the magnificence of our equipage ; but this can only be for a few years, at the expiration of which we shall vanish like smoke. We may enjoy riches and honors, and revel in pleasures ; but death will at length come, and take us from all that appears agreeable in this world. Death will put an end to the misery of the poor and the afflicted, and deliver them from the troubles under which they now labor, and level them in the dust equally with the most happy and prosperous. Death knows no distinction between high and low, rich or poor, happy or miserable. It seizes on all alike. In a word ; old and young of both sexes, and of

every condition, must own this truth: *It is appointed for all men once to die.*

But if nothing be more certain than death, still nothing is more uncertain than the time when we must die: perhaps in a few years, months, weeks, days, or this very hour: we are continually exposed to death, and know not when it may come. How many instances have we of sudden and unforeseen accidents, which have deprived men of their lives? Thus whilst there is but one way to come into the world, there are thousands whereby we go out of it: a fever kills one, a consumption another, apoplexy a third: the most inconsiderate accidents cause the death of many. A trifling scratch, a small bruise, a slight wound neglected, increases, and proves mortal; even lingering distempers, which afford time to prepare for death, may be truly called sudden, since all diseases have a beginning, and generally seize us when we least expect them. The first attack is seldom feared and we hope that it will shortly pass away; but, continuing, a physician is sent for. He comes, tells the sick man to have courage, assures him there is no danger, applies his remedies, which, however, have little or no effect. The sickness increases: his strength becomes exhausted, and at length the patient dies. Is not his death

sudden and unexpected? Who can tell how soon this may be our own case? Youth, or strength, or the prime of life is no security. The widow's son, whom our Saviour raised from the dead, was a young man in the flower of his age, but he died, and would also have been buried, had not Jesus met the funeral, and pitying his mother's tears, restored him to life.

What are the consequences we should draw from this reflection? Does it not follow that we ought to make a diligent and timely preparation for death? This cannot be denied: yet alas! how careless are we in the performance of so essential a duty. How small are the number of those who are solicitous to hear of death! But let us seriously consider that if death finds us unprepared, we shall be eternally miserable: whereas, if by the constant exercise of a pious life, we keep ourselves always prepared, death will then open to us a secure passage from the miseries of this world to the happiness of the next. We must not flatter ourselves with the mistaken notion of preparing ourselves in our last sickness by a death-bed repentance. Nothing can be more dangerous than to defer from time to time our preparation for death. May it not justly provoke God to snatch us away suddenly, and not

allow us a moment of time? Has not this, alas! been the fatal case of numberless procrastinating Christians, who, having put off their preparation for death, from this to that time, have at length found no time, and are eternally lost. To avoid a similar misfortune, let us now, whilst we have time and opportunity, and the advantages of life and health, seriously prepare ourselves for our last end, and remember that the best preparation for a happy death is a good life. This is of such great importance, as to demand our most attentive consideration. We can only die once. When that time arrives, if we should not be prepared to die as we ought, we are eternally lost: but to die well, will secure our happiness forever.

## PRAYER.

O, MY LORD and my God! in whom I live, move, and have my being, may I live to thee by dying daily to myself and the world. As I must one day die, and be eternally separated from the things of this world, how little reason have I to be fond of this life which I cannot long enjoy; of which I know not how soon I may be deprived. I must die, but I know not when. How necessary therefore is it, that I should not only think of death, but also diligently prepare for it! O, grant therefore, that

I may constantly have my last hour in view, and never forfeit thy favor by sin, nor fall a prey to the enemy of my soul. I will, O, my God! through the help of thy grace, use my most serious and sincere endeavors to prepare myself to quit this world, and die in thy service : to live in thy fear, that I may expire in thy favor ; that when death shall close my eyes to this world, I may open them to behold thy glory in the next. Then shall my happy soul sing with joy and triumph : *O, death where is thy sting ? O, grave, where is thy victory ?*

My soul ! why need we fear death ? A life of virtue ; a life spent in the service of God, will effectually remove all its terrors, blunt the sharpness of its dart, and render it no more than a swift, an easy passage to heaven and to eternal bliss. Thou hast decreed, O, God ! that all men should die ; if then I die well, I shall be happy forever. I humbly adore and submit to this thy universal decree. I offer my life as a sacrifice to thee, being willing to die this day, or any time, and in what manner thou pleasest : but whenever, dearest Lord, thou callest me from this world, take me to thyself, that in the possession of thee, I may remain forever in happiness and security. O, may I breathe out my soul at my expiring moments, with a perfect conformity to thy blessed will !



## FRIDAY

## IN THE FOURTH WEEK OF LENT.

GOSPEL.—*John xi. 1-45.*

*At that time :* There was a certain man sick named Lazarus, of Bethania, of the town of Mary, and of Martha her sister. (And Mary was she that anointed the Lord with ointment, and wiped his feet with her hair, whose brother Lazarus was sick.) His sisters therefore sent to him, saying: Lord, behold, he whom thou lovest is sick. And Jesus hearing it, said to them: This sickness is not unto death, but for the glory of God: that the Son of God may be glorified by it. Now Jesus loved Martha, and her sister Mary, and Lazarus. When he had heard therefore that he was sick, he still remained in the same place two days. Then after that he said to his disciples: Let us go into Judea again. The disciples say to him: Rabbi, the Jews but now sought to stone thee, and goest thou thither again? Jesus answered: Are there not twelve hours of the day? If a man walk in the day, he stumbleth not, because he seeth the light of this world: but if he walk in the night, he stumbleth, because the light is

not in him. These things he said : and after that he said to them : Lazarus our friend sleepeth ; but I go that I may awake him out of sleep. His disciples therefore said : Lord, if he sleep he shall do well. But Jesus spoke of his death ; and they thought that he spoke of the repose of sleep. Then therefore Jesus said to them plainly : Lazarus is dead ; and I am glad for your sakes, that I was not there, that you may believe : but let us go to him. Thomas, therefore, who is called Didymus, said to his fellow disciples : Let us also go, that we may die with him. Jesus therefore came, and found that he had been four days already in the grave. (Now Bethania was near Jerusalem, about fifteen furlongs off.) And many of the Jews were come to Martha and Mary, to comfort them concerning their brother. Martha, therefore, as soon as she heard that Jesus was come, went to meet him : but Mary sat at home. Martha therefore said to Jesus : Lord, if thou hadst been here, my brother had not died ; but now also I know, that whatsoever thou wilt ask of God, God will give it thee. Jesus saith to her : Thy brother shall rise again. Martha saith to him : I know that he shall rise again in the resurrection at the last day. Jesus said to her : I am the resurrection and the life ; he that believeth in me, although

he be dead, shall live : and every one that liveth and believeth in me, shall not die forever. Believest thou this? She saith to him : Yea, Lord, I have believed that thou art Christ the Son of the living God, who art come into this world. And when she had said these things, she went, and called her sister Mary secretly, saying : The Master is come, and calleth for thee. She as soon as she heard this, riseth quickly, and cometh to him : for Jesus was not yet come into the town ; but he was still in that place where Martha had met him. The Jews therefore, who were with her in the house, and comforted her, when they saw Mary that she rose up speedily, and went out, followed her saying. She goeth to the grave, to weep there. When Mary therefore was come where Jesus was, seeing him, she fell down at his feet, and saith to him : Lord, if thou hadst been here, my brother had not died. Jesus therefore, when he saw her weeping, and the Jews that were come with her, weeping, he groaned in the spirit, and troubled himself. And said : Where have you laid him? They say to him : Lord, come and see. And Jesus wept. The Jews therefore said : Behold how he loved him. But some of them said : Could not he, that opened the eyes of the man born blind, have caused that this man should not die? Jesus

therefore again groaning in himself, cometh to the sepulcher ; now it was a cave, and a stone was laid over it. Jesus saith : Take away the stone. Martha, the sister of him that was dead, saith to him : Lord, by this time he stinketh, for he is now four days. Jesus saith to her : Did not I say to thee, that if thou believe, thou shalt see the glory of God ? They took therefore the stone away : And Jesus lifting up his eyes, said : Father, I give thee thanks that thou hast heard me. And I know that thou hearest me always, but because of the people who stand about have I said it, that they believe that thou hast sent me. When he had said these things, he cried with a loud voice : Lazarus, come forth. And presently he that had been dead came forth, bound feet and hands with winding bands, and his face was bound about with a napkin. Jesus said to them : Loose him and let him go. Many therefore of the Jews, who were come to Mary and Martha, and had seen the things that Jesus did, believed in him.

#### MEDITATION.

OF all the miracles of our blessed Saviour, we find none accompanied with more wonderful, or particular circumstances than that of his raising Lazarus from the dead. Our blessed

Lord, to avoid the fury of the Jews who sought to stone him, had retired from Jerusalem beyond the Jordan, when Martha and Mary, the sisters of Lazarus, sent to acquaint him, that *he* whom *he loved* was sick ; (meaning *their brother*.) They did not even mention his name, nor desire that Jesus would come and heal him. It was enough to let Jesus know, that he whom he loved was sick.

When we have the happiness to be beloved by God, we are sure never to be abandoned by him ; we shall find him at all times ready to come to our assistance : Christ loved *Mary*, and *Martha*, and *Lazarus*. They frequently received him into their house ; their kind hospitality was recompensed by raising Lazarus from death to life ! He was sick ; he died ; and was buried ; he had lain in the grave four days ; but when Jesus said : *Lazarus, come forth* ; he arose again to life, and lived many years. In our reflections on this subject, two things present themselves for our consideration, which may be highly beneficial. Whilst the death of Lazarus represents the condition of a just man, who permits himself to be perverted, and by losing his virtue, dies spiritually, so his resurrection is an image of the state of a converted sinner, rising from the death of sin to the life of grace, in which the miracle recorded

in the Gospel of this day will perfectly instruct us.

Nothing falls instantaneously, but gradually into a state of corruption ; a man does not fall suddenly from virtue to vice : for as corporal sickness has its beginning, its progress, and its end, the same may be said of the spiritual malady of one, who falls from a virtuous, into a vicious course of life. Lazarus was ill ; his sickness increased till he died. When our Saviour raised him to life, he had lain four days in the grave, and his body was beginning to decompose. Behold a just figure of one, who is perverted from virtue to vice. He begins to be careless and negligent in his duty, from whence he easily falls into a state of tepidity. In time the distemper may be said to grow stronger, and it is then extremely difficult to recover a lukewarm Christian, because under the pretext of not being guilty of enormous sins, he falsely imagines himself out of that danger, which afterwards appears. By gradually omitting the practise of virtue, vice assumes its place, and he becomes quite changed : thus, the grace and favor of God being lost, he becomes spiritually dead, and, by the contagion of his bad example, he corrupts others. Behold the deplorable condition of a just man perverted by the spirit of the world. Nothing

but the powerful grace of God (*Lazarus, come forth*) can raise him from death to life. Ah! yes, divine grace is indeed able to raise him from death to life, if he throws no obstacle in the way. Let us consider this miraculous conversion, or resurrection of a sinner, from the death of sin, to the spiritual life of grace: of which the resurrection of Lazarus is an instructive example.

Christ raised Lazarus to life, at the intercession of his sisters Mary and Martha. From this *let us learn to pray for our fallen brethren*. There are many sinners whose conversion is owing to the prayers of their friends; for God is frequently pleased to show them his mercy, through the charity of others who pray for them. Christ commanded that they should remove the stone from the grave of Lazarus, to give us to understand, that before we can spiritually rise, we must first remove every impediment. This is not a difficult task, since a *sincere desire* of being converted will assist us. The stone was no sooner removed, than Christ said, with a loud voice, *Lazarus, come forth*, thus teaching us, that the voice of God speaking by his grace, is absolutely necessary for the accomplishment of our spiritual resurrection. Lazarus obeyed the voice of our Saviour; he immediately came forth; so we, if we desire to

rise from the grave of sin, must immediately obey the voice of God, and not resist the motions of his grace; for if we hesitate, or defer our compliance, *we may never rise, but remain forever dead in the grave of sin.* Lazarus being come forth from his grave, our Saviour ordered him to be loosed. This last circumstance signifies that God requires that a penitent sinner should have recourse to his ministers, the priests of the church, in order to be loosed from the bands of his sins. Christ could, by a word, have made the bands fall from Lazarus, but he would have *his disciples loose and remove them.* God by his own power can break the chains of our sins; but he would have us address ourselves to those, to whom he has given power to free us from them, to set us at liberty. Happy, thrice happy, those whom our merciful Lord thus calls from the grave of sin, whom he raises to a life of grace. Of them it may be said, their infirmity was not to death, but that the power of God might be manifested in them, by calling them forth to eternal life.

#### PRAYER.

SINCE it is thou alone, O, my God! that canst work the miraculous change of raising me to life when dead in sin, let my soul experience



the happy effect of thy goodness. When thou callest by thy grace, and sayest to me: *Come forth*, O, may these powerful words effectually sound in my ears, and cause me to rise immediately. Loose me, O, Lord! from those bands wherewith I feel myself encumbered, deliver me from all obstacles, that I may obey and follow thee. When thou hast thus restored me to life, perfect what thou hast begun, and suffer me not to relapse into my former criminal habits. Preserve me from all coldness, negligence, and indifference; and permit not the enemy of my soul to prevail over me. Though I have been long dead, and have begun to putrefy, yet thy powerful grace can restore me to life, and cleanse me from all corruption: then shall my soul magnify the wonders of thy mercy, and praise thy holy name. Ah! have I not reason to praise thee, thou bountiful Author of Life? How often have I experienced thy goodness and mercy, and shall I be so horribly ungrateful as to abuse it, and by a relapse, bring on death again? Ah, rather let me be annihilated, than live here a moment wilfully to offend thee. No, my God, I will endeavor to preserve the spiritual life thou hast restored to me by dedicating myself totally to thy love and service. I will love thee, O, true life and happiness of my soul! I will love thee with my whole heart,

with my whole mind, and my whole strength. As it is in thee I wish to live, and in thee I desire to die, I will remain no longer in the grave of sloth and tepidity, but will arise at thy gracious call, and serve thee with zeal to the last moment of my life, that I may live and be eternally happy with thee hereafter.

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## SATURDAY

IN THE FOURTH WEEK OF LENT.

GOSPEL.—*John viii.* 12-20.

*At that time ; Jesus spoke to the multitude of the Jews : saying : I am the light of the world ; he that followeth me, walketh not in darkness, but shall have the light of life. The Pharisees therefore said to him : Thou givest testimony of thyself : thy testimony is not true. Jesus answered, and said to them : Although I give testimony of myself, my testimony is true ; for I know whence I came, and whither I go : but you know not whence I come, or whither I go. You judge according to the flesh : I judge not any man. And if I do judge, my judgment is true : because I am not alone ; but I and the Father that sent me. And in your law it is*

written, that the testimony of two men is true. I am one that give testimony of myself: and the Father that sent me, giveth testimony of me. They said therefore to him: Where is thy Father? Jesus answered: Neither me do you know, nor my Father: if you did know me, perhaps you would know my Father also. These words Jesus spoke in the treasury, teaching in the temple: and no man laid hands on him, because his hour was not yet come.

#### INSTRUCTION.

WHEN our blessed Saviour declared himself to be the light of the world, and that whoever followed him walked not in darkness, the Jews accused him of falsehood, because he bore testimony of himself. But Christ immediately removed the aspersion, by telling them, that though his testimony was of himself, yet it was true, being confirmed by the testimony of his heavenly Father, and the many evident miracles which he wrought, to convince them that he was the Son of God, and their promised Messiah. If it was an inexcusable obstinacy in the Jews not to yield to that undeniable conviction, and those ocular demonstrations our Saviour gave them, what can be said of those Christians, who, in the practical part of

their lives, have too great a resemblance to the Jews, who did not acknowledge him? That there are many of this class, is but too evident, when we take the lives of the generality of Christians into consideration.

Christ declares himself to be the light of the world ; whoever therefore does not follow him in the road of his gospel precepts most certainly walks in the dark. To follow Christ, we must walk in the way of humility, self-denial, mortification, and penance. This is that narrow way which leads to life, and as he himself says : *there are few who find it* : can this be wondered at, when so many choose to walk in the broad way of pride, ease, and luxury ; when nothing is so much sought after as vanity and folly, and whilst the fashions of the world are the sole rule of their conduct. The followers of Jesus Christ fly from the dangerous vanities of the world, they are disgusted with every object that may captivate their hearts and affections, or have a tendency to make them neglect the important affairs of salvation, but alas ! how small is their number ? The things of this world could not be more eagerly, or with greater assiduity sought after, than if we were commanded, under the most severe penalties, to prefer them before all other things. Is it not then evident, that the far greater number

of Christians, notwithstanding their exterior profession, do not follow Christ, and of consequence walk in the dark, even under the meridian light of the gospel.

To follow Christ, we must walk in the way of love and charity, by forgiving injuries, bearing with, and assisting each other. How little of this charity do we find among Christians? On the contrary, how much hatred, malice, and contention do we daily behold? Can this be called following Christ? Far from it: is it not rather walking in the dark, and following the blind guides of our unmortified and irregular passions, which will infallibly lead us into the pit of eternal perdition? There are others who do not follow Christ because they refuse to be directed by those guides whom he has placed over them; who take upon themselves to be *their own directors*; who are for widening the narrow path, by reconciling the fashions of the world with the maxims of the gospel. These, by not following Christ, and that light which he has set up to direct them, walk in the dark, and therefore, by continually stumbling and falling, fail to arrive at the kingdom of light and lose themselves in the intricate mazes of error and iniquity.

*I am the light of the world*, says Jesus Christ. It is by his light that every sincere Christian

walks, and suspects whatever is not conformable to the doctrine of the gospel. Hence, he endeavors to regulate himself and his actions by its maxims, and does not so much depend upon the character or profession of a Christian, as to be careful to live like one. This appears by his constant attendance upon the service of God; the care he takes to bridle his passions; to live in peace and charity with his neighbor, and to do good to all men. Happy! thrice happy! the few who, by following their divine Master, have learned to despise the world, its empty noise, and pompous show! These are they to whom Christ says: *Fear not, little flock, for it hath pleased the Father to give you a kingdom.* (Luke xii.) These are they who are styled in Scripture *Children of Light*. And such we are all invited to become, for the apostle exhorts us all to cast off the works of darkness, and put on the armor of light. This the church earnestly recommends to us, especially at this time; that disposing ourselves for celebrating the sacred mysteries of our blessed Lord's passion and glorious resurrection, we may so follow him here, in the narrow path of his sufferings, that we may hereafter rise with him and become partakers of his glory.

## PRAYER.

O, SOVEREIGN Light of the world! adorable Saviour of mankind! illuminate my soul, and remove from thence the darkness of sin. I desire to follow thee, O, Jesus! for thou only art the Way, the Truth, and the Life. Whilst I walk after thee I need fear no danger; but when I rashly forsake thee, I expose myself to certain ruin. If I follow the world and its maxims, I walk in the dark, and shall be lost: if I follow my passions and corrupt inclinations, whither will those blind guides lead me? Alas! to a fatal precipice, over which, I must inevitably fall, and perish! I will therefore be always on my guard against them, and adhere closely to thee. I will follow thee, without turning either to the right or to the left. I will walk in the narrow path, and strive to enter at the strait gate, that with thee I may enjoy eternal life. For this I beg the assistance of thy grace, without which I can do nothing.

O, Jesus! the true light, which enlightens every man coming into the world, illuminate my soul with thy resplendent rays, that I may see perfectly my way to thee. O, Life, whereby I live, and without which I die, may I live by thee, and for thee only. O true Life of my soul, all that I wish for or desire! my God and

my all, I consider everything without thee as nothing. If without thy light all is darkness, how then shall I be able to find my way to thee? Enlighten my eyes, O, God, that I walk not in the shadow of death. (Psalm xii.) Then shall I behold thy beauty and goodness, then shall my heart tend towards thee. Thee will I follow, and be safe from all danger, till I happily arrive at the clear vision and enjoyment of thee, in the mansions of everlasting happiness.

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## MONDAY

### IN PASSION WEEK.

GOSPEL.—*John vii. 32-39.*

*At that time :* The rulers and Pharisees sent ministers to apprehend Jesus. Jesus therefore said to them : Yet a little while I am with you : and *then* I go to him that sent me. You shall seek me, and shall not find me : and where I am, *thither* you cannot come. The Jews therefore said among themselves : Whither will he go, that we shall not find him ? Will he go to the dispersed among the Gentiles, and teach the Gentiles ? What is this saying that he hath said : You shall seek me, and shall not find



me: and where I am you cannot come? And on the last *and* great day of the festivity Jesus stood and cried, saying; If any man thirst, let him come to me, and drink. He that believeth in me, as the scripture saith, "Out of his belly shall flow rivers of living water." Now this he said of the Spirit which they should receive who believed in him.

#### INSTRUCTION.

*You shall seek me, and shall not find me*, is one of those alarming truths which deserves our serious consideration; and although it seems a contradiction to what he elsewhere says: *Seek and you shall find*, (Luke xi.) a little reflection will not only perfectly reconcile them, but also instruct us in one of the most important lessons delivered in the sacred oracles. *Seek and you shall find*, says Jesus Christ; who being truth itself, cannot deceive us. No; if we sincerely seek him, we shall assuredly find him; and in him we shall find all we want or can desire. It must be observed, that our blessed Lord spoke these words to his beloved disciples, who believed in him, and followed him; and in them, to all Christians who sincerely desire to find him. But, when he told the Jews, they *should seek him and not find him*, he addressed

himself to those who declared themselves his *enemies*; who refused to own him as their Messiah; who openly reviled his doctrine; denied his miracles; and calumniated his sacred person. To these he declares, that in punishment of their obstinacy and infidelity, they should seek him, but not being able to find him, *they should die in their sins*. Christ is easily found by every sincere Christian who seeks him when he should, and as he ought; but not by a sinner who never seeks him as he should, or only when it is too late to find him; or when his crimes have justly provoked God to withdraw himself entirely from him. Hence, we may infer, that there is a time when God may be found, but we will not seek him; or in other words, when he would save us, but we will not be saved. There may also be a time when we seek him, but shall not be able to find him; that is, we shall desire to be saved, but not desiring it as we ought, or, only when it is too late, God will not save us. Ah! should not these terrible truths make sinners tremble!

There cannot be a greater insult offered to the majesty and power of the omnipotent Creator of all things, than that man, the work of his hands, should refuse to co-operate in the execution of his will; can, or ought such a base insult be permitted? Yes: for God having

created man, and endowed him with *reason* and *free-will*, it follows as a necessary consequence, that he should be left free as to the good or bad use of both. Now it is evident that God desires the salvation of a sinner, but the sinner himself does not sincerely desire it. God continually thinks of us, but we seldom think of him. He even condescends to request us to accept salvation ; but we, alas ! refuse the favor.

There is nothing that God desires more sincerely than the salvation of man. He is as earnestly desirous of it as if it concerned himself. Hence St. Paul calls the salvation of man *the riches of the glory of God*. (Ephes. iii.) As if to save a sinner were a new acquisition to him, he demands it of us with all possible tenderness ; he knocks continually at the gate of our hearts ; he takes not a first, second, or third denial. He is represented in holy scripture as a lover knocking at the door of his beloved, calling upon her, and conjuring her in the most affectionate terms that love can inspire, to open the door and let him in ; that he may no longer be exposed to the inclemency of the weather. *Open to me, my sister, my love, my dove, because my head is covered with dew*. (Cant. v.) It is thus Jesus Christ solicits sinners by his inspirations, and the motions of his grace, by the ministers of his word, and by good books,

But what return do sinners make? They neither hearken to his words nor attend to his calls. Their thoughts are occupied with the things of this world ; they desire nothing but to enjoy its riches, honors, and pleasures. From this it is manifest that God is desirous of our salvation, and that we neither think of it, nor desire it as we ought ; or if we sometimes express a desire of being saved, is there any reason to think us sincere, when we do nothing to obtain salvation ?

What has not God done to procure for us eternal happiness? He became man, died on the cross, and established in his holy Church those mysteries of grace the holy sacraments ; authorized his ministers in his name, to absolve penitent sinners ; gives us his sacred body and blood for the food and nourishment of our souls ; offers his grace to assist us ; and promises an eternal kingdom as the recompense of our fidelity and perseverance in his service. So that he may truly say to us he did to the Jews : *What could I have done more for my vineyard which I have not done?* (Isaias v.) Yes, dearest Lord ! thou hast done all that could be necessary, on thy part, for our salvation ; but alas ! we do little or nothing for ourselves. It is but too evident that all, or at least the far greater part of what we do, is done for this life. To

increase our fortunes, enrich our families, and enjoy the riches and pleasures of this world we labor with unremitting solicitude and unwearyed diligence. For this we spare neither time nor pains. Is it not manifest from the course of our lives, that despite all that God has done for us, we are unwilling to do anything for him, or rather for ourselves? Though he is to be found, we will not seek him, and though he wishes we should be happy, we do not sincerely desire it ourselves.

Have we any reason then to be surprised at the severe threat pronounced by Jesus Christ against the Jews: *You shall seek me, and you shall not find me?* Since sinners will not seek God, whilst he may be found, nor take any pains to secure that salvation which God is so anxious to procure for them, there may be a time when they will seem to seek him, but shall not be able to find him: when they shall desire to be saved, but not desiring it as they ought, or when it is too late, God will not save them. This awful truth is asserted in holy scripture in such plain terms, that, however severe it may seem, it cannot be called in question: *Because I called, and you refused: I stretched out my hand, and there was none that regarded. You have despised all my counsel and have neglected my reprehensions.*

*I also will laugh in your destruction, and will mock when that shall come to you which you feared. When sudden calamity shall fall on you, and destruction, as a tempest, shall be at hand : when tribulation and distress shall come upon you ; then shall they call upon me, and I will not hear : they shall rise in the morning and shall not find me. (Prov. i. 24-28.)*

This is confirmed by the Son of God speaking to the Jews: *You shall die in your sins.* Ah ! deplorable condition of wilful sinners, who only seek God when he is not to be found ! who defer their repentance till their last moments, when they can sin no longer, and are obliged to leave all their criminal enjoyments, to be separated from which will be the real cause of the sorrow they shall then experience. This is not said to invalidate the sincerity of a death-bed repentance, or to maintain that a sinner cannot be truly converted in his last hours. God has mercifully granted that grace to some, and therefore none ought to despair. The conversion of a sinner can never be too late when it is sincere ; but then it must also be considered, that those late conversions are perhaps only apparent, and give too much reason to suspect their sincerity. Is it not then the greatest folly and imprudence, to commit an affair of such importance

to the hazard of a death-bed repentance, since those who do so, have such just reason to fear that God will not then be found? It is no easy matter for those to seek God, as they ought, when dying, who have refused to seek him during life. Alas! if he should then refuse to hear us, we shall be eternally miserable. Of this he assures us himself; and shall we then presume to run the hazard of not seeking him whilst he may be found?

## PRAYER.

O, GOD, of infinite goodness and mercy, who desirest not the death of a sinner, but rather that he be converted and live! How long shall sinners abuse thy bounty, and refuse thy gracious invitations? O, touch their hearts with a wholesome fear of thy terrible judgments, that before it be too late, they may do penance for their sins, and be reconciled to thee. Preserve me, dear Lord, from the spirit of delusion, and suffer me not to be deaf to thy divine calls and holy inspirations. May I now seek thee, whilst thou art to be found, so that I may find thee. Let not the devil and the world prevail upon me, to neglect the great concern of my salvation. If I have hitherto unhappily strayed from the true way, bring me

mercifully back. Open my eyes to behold the dangers to which my sins expose me. As thou hast hitherto waited for my conversion, let me not longer abuse thy incomparable patience. I bow down and adore thy wonderful goodness, and hope to experience its happy effects; I purpose to amend my life, and from this moment begin to love and serve thee. From this instant I will begin to seek thee, and having found thee, may I never more lose thee.

Thou hast said, *seek, and you shall find*. (Matt. vii.) Let me daily seek thee, dear Lord, in the way where thou art to be found: the way of humility, of self-denial, and an ardent love of thyself above all things. Open my eyes that I may walk in the light, that light which is thy very self, and by which thou guidest souls to thee, that I may no more wander in darkness. Open my ears, O, Lord! that hearing thy voice, *I may run after thee in the way of thy commandments*. (Psalm cxviii.) *Speak, Lord, for thy servant heareth*. (1 Kings iii.) O, speak aloud, that thy voice may pierce my ears, touch my heart, and make me forever thy faithful servant.



## TUESDAY

## IN PASSION WEEK.

GOSPEL.—*John* vii. 1-13.

*At that time :* Jesus walked in Galilee ; for he would not walk in Judea : because the Jews sought to kill him. Now the Jews' feast of tabernacles was at hand. And his brethren said to him : Pass from hence, and go into Judea ; that thy disciples also may see thy works which thou dost. For there is no man that doth anything in secret, and he himself seeketh to be known openly ; if thou do these things manifest thyself to the world. For neither did his brethren believe in him. Then Jesus said to them : My time is not yet come ; but your time is always ready. The world cannot hate you ; but me it hateth : because I give testimony of it, that the works thereof are evil. Go you up to this festival day ; but I go not up to this festival day ; because my time is not accomplished. When he had said these things, he himself staid in Galilee. But after his brethren were gone up, then he also went up to the feast, not openly, but as it were in secret. The Jews therefore sought him on the

festival day, and said : Where is he ? And there was much murmuring among the multitude concerning him. For some said : He is a good man. And others said : No, but he seduceth the people. Yet no man spoke openly of him, for fear of the Jews.

#### INSTRUCTION.

THE feast of the Tabernacles, of which mention is made in this gospel was one of the principal solemnities of the Jews, which continued for the space of seven days, during which time they were obliged to quit their habitations, and dwell under tents, or arbors made of the boughs of trees, as an annual memorial of their forefathers having dwelt under tents forty years in the desert ; and to thank God for having brought them into the land of promise. Our blessed Saviour was present at this festival, being very exact in observing all the established solemnities of the Jewish institute, or the law of Moses, then in force, and not as yet abrogated. As this feast was instituted for a memorial to the Jews, of their passage through the desert, and their having dwelt there forty years before they entered the land of Canaan ; so we, from our blessed Lord having been present,

may draw this useful and moral reflection, to look upon ourselves as strangers and pilgrims, passing through the desert of this world, towards the heavenly Canaan the true land of promise, and esteem ourselves as having no fixed habitation, according to what St. Paul says : *Here we have not a permanent city, but we seek that which is to come.* (Heb. xiii.) Consequently every Christian ought to hold this world in contempt, and conceive an ardent desire to arrive at heaven, the place of his destination. This is what may be observed in all travelers, who do not fix their affections upon what they behold in passing along, but have their thoughts chiefly occupied on arriving at their journey's end.

The principal reason why the Christian traveler ought to despise the things of this world is, because everything in it is transitory, nothing durable : even the world itself, the great theater of so many changes and revolutions, passes away. It grows every day older, till at length it shall be consumed in a general conflagration : and though we are willing to suppose the period of its final destruction to be many ages distant, yet it may arrive sooner than we imagine, since we *know neither the day nor the hour.* (Matt. xxv.) God having in his infinite wisdom, and for our benefit, kept the exact

time of its destruction a secret to himself, that being on the one hand certain that this awful event will take place, and on the other, uncertain as to the time of its being accomplished, we might look on the world with a traveler's eye, as a fleeting object, more worthy of our contempt than our esteem. But if the world itself be thus transitory, its goods and possessions are much more so : and therefore we have little reason to be attached to them. The estates and riches of which we are at present in possession, we may, in a very little time, be deprived of. A thousand accidents may take them from us, and cause a strange revolution in our fortune. Many who are now rich may in a little time become miserably poor ! How many poor as suddenly grow rich ! Nothing is more uncertain, or less durable, than riches. Are pleasures and diversions more stable and lasting ? No : the pursuit of them is generally attended with numberless vexations and disappointments, and so fickle are they, that the wise man, with a great deal of justice and truth, calls them, and everything else under the sun, *Vanity of vanities*. (Eccles. i.) We have a confirmation of this truth in ourselves ; for what are our bodies but houses of clay, in danger every moment of falling ? What more uncertain and precarious than health, of which sick-

ness may quickly deprive us? and without health, what are the enjoyments of the world? From this it appears that we are in this world only as pilgrims or travelers. Our bodies are as so many tents or tabernacles, wherein our souls reside during our journey through this life to the next, as the Jews dwelt in tents during their passage through the desert into Canaan. Happy! thrice happy those Christians who imbibe these sentiments, and feel no attachment to the things of this world; who look upon it only as a great inn, wherein they may refresh themselves in their journey to heaven, whither they earnestly desire to arrive, that they may enjoy God forever. This continual desire of advancing towards heaven, is another part of the character of a Christian traveler. Insensible, in a great measure, to the things of this world, which are more the objects of his dislike than his desires, he looks upon them with an eye of indifference and contempt, incessantly sighing after the *celestial Canaan*, he with a holy impatience cries out: *When shall I come, and appear in the presence of God.* (Psal. xli.) *Wo is me, that my sojourning is prolonged! that I am forced to dwell in the tents of Kedar.* (Psal. cxix.) These are the pious breathings of holy souls, whereby they express just ideas both of this, and the other world. Oh! that

they were so deeply rooted in our minds, as to have such an influence on our actions, that our lives might be regulated by them ; for it is not merely wishing or desiring that will bear us thither, any more than they will bring us to our journey's end. We must therefore not only desire heaven, but also labor to obtain it. Heaven is proposed to us as a recompense for our labor ; so that if we will not work, we have no right to expect any wages. When Christ says : *If you will enter into life, keep the commandments*, ( Matt. xix. ) he states the terms on which we can hope to gain the wages of eternal life. To our desires then, let us join our best endeavors, and *strive by good works to make our calling and election sure.* ( 2 Pet. i. )

#### PRAYER.

I SINCERELY desire, O, my God ! and firmly purpose to serve thee, and keep thy commandments ; it is thus only, I may hope to obtain eternal happiness. I despise the world, and every thing it contains, as unworthy my attention. I am truly sorry, O, my God ! for not having observed thy commandments, and purpose to be more careful for the future : being here only a wayfarer, as such I esteem myself, fixing my mind and affections on my heavenly

home: all my desires tend towards thee; all my endeavors shall be to arrive at the enjoyment of thee, for it is in thee only I can be happy, and without thee I shall be eternally miserable.

Ah, my soul: why do we employ ourselves about empty nothings? Heaven is our home; thither we are bound, and thither let us bend our course with all possible speed. What can this world be compared to but a wretched inn, wherein we are obliged to lodge only for a time, for we must not look upon it as our dwelling place. O, my God! since thou hast created me for thyself alone, I will seek thee, and thee alone. Alas! I have hitherto been too negligent. I have dissipated my time, but let me be more diligent for the future. Adieu, vain world, I renounce all thou canst give, for I am bound to heaven, where I hope to see, and enjoy my God forever. Courage then, O, my soul! let us proceed with resolution, and constancy. Let us so run as to obtain the glorious prize. O, my God! it is what I desire, assist me by thy grace that I may happily succeed.

## WEDNESDAY

## IN PASSION WEEK.

GOSPEL.—*John* x. 22.—38.

*At that time :* It was the feast of the dedication at Jerusalem : and it was winter. And Jesus walked in the temple in Solomon's porch, the Jews therefore came round about him, and said to him. How long dost thou hold our souls in suspense? If thou be the Christ, tell us plainly. Jesus answered them : I speak to you, and you believe not ; the works that I do in the name of my Father, they give testimony of me : but you do not believe, because you are not of my sheep. My sheep hear my voice : and I know them and they follow me : and I give them life everlasting and they shall not perish forever, and no man shall pluck them out of my hand. That which my Father hath given me, is greater than all : and no man can snatch *them* out of the hand of my Father. I and the Father are one. The Jews then took up stones to stone him. Jesus answered them : Many good works I have showed you from my Father ; for which of those works do you stone me? The Jews answered him : For a good



work we stone thee not, but for blasphemy : and because that thou being a man, makest thyself God. Jesus answered them : Is it not written in your law : *I said, you are Gods ?* If he called them gods, to whom the word of God was spoken, and the scripture cannot be broken ; do you say of him, whom the Father hath sanctified and sent into the world : Thou blasphemest : because I said, I am the Son of God ? If I do not the works of my Father, believe me not. But if I do : though you will not believe me, believe the works, that you may know and believe that the Father is in me, and I in the Father.

## INSTRUCTION.

IF Christ told the Jews they did not believe in him, because they were not of his sheep : the same may be said of many who, although they call themselves Christians, yet not believing in him with a right faith, are not of his fold. *My sheep*, says Jesus Christ, *hear my voice, and I know them, and they follow me.* Whoever therefore does not hear the voice of Christ, is not of his flock : this assertion, however severe, is nevertheless true ; and for these reasons assigned by truth itself. First, they cannot be called his sheep who hear not his voice, nor follow him in the observance of what

he commands, in the practical part of the gospel. There are, alas! too many, who believe all the truths of the gospel in speculation, but condemn them in practise. Choosing to walk in the way of sin, they cannot be said to follow Christ, and therefore are not of his flock. There are others also, who, although they call themselves Christians, yet refuse to hear his voice when he speaks to them by his church, and thereby rejecting her authority, separate themselves from his sheep, and belong not to his fold. This he has declared. *He who will not hear the church, let him be esteemed as a heathen and publican.* (Matt. xviii.) And, *He who despises you, the pastors of his church, despises me; and he who despises me, despises him that sent me.* (Luke x.) This will show positively that it is his will, that we should hear the church, and submit to her authority. When we show this submissive, this respectful docility, in obeying her voice, we give the most evident proof that we are of his sheep. If, on the other hand, we do not hear the church, there is every reason to affirm that we do not belong to Christ.

Let us consider that nothing is more *necessary*, more *just*, and more *glorious* than through a submission of judgment to the church, to hear and obey the voice of Jesus Christ. Noth-

ing more *necessary*, since it is the positive will of God that we should be under his guidance, otherwise we shall find it impossible to direct ourselves, with security, in the way of salvation; as without the light of *faith and submission*, we would fall into pernicious errors. Had it not been *necessary*, Christ would never have obliged us *to hear the church*, under the severe penalty of being considered as heathens and publicans. For this reason, the apostle exhorts us *to obey our bishops and pastors, who are placed over us to watch for the good of our souls*. (Heb. xiii.) After so plain a declaration, to refuse obedience, is a sign of consummate pride, an unbounded desire to act as we please: qualifications which will never entitle us to the honor of being numbered among the sheep of Christ. When we reflect, that nothing can be more subject to error than the mind of man; when we consider into how many absurd and extravagant opinions so many great and learned men have fallen, by trusting to their own judgment, and refusing to submit to the decisions of the church; when we recall to mind the fatal consequences to thousands of souls, in the many schisms this refractory spirit has caused in the church of God, and the heresies it has produced, we shall then *be convinced of the necessity of hearing and obeying the church*, and

acknowledge her for the *true and final judge* of such controversies, as may arise. This is evident from the nature of all political bodies, wherein some, as heads and rulers, are appointed to govern and direct; others as members, to hear and obey. Such is the nature of the church; it is a spiritual body politic, wherein it is impossible to preserve peace and union, or to avoid schisms and divisions, if every one is at liberty to set himself up for his own guide, and reject her authority over him. Such are not of his sheep. *The sheep of Christ are all in one fold, preserving the unity of spirit in the bond of peace*, by following him, and obeying the pastors of the church, especially its visible and supreme head. Those who refuse this obedience, are no better than wolves in sheep's clothing, whose only aim is to draw unwary sheep from Christ's fold. The best security against such, is to adhere firmly to the *faith once delivered to the saints*, (Jude iii.) and not, *like children, be blown about by every wind of doctrine*. (Ephes. iv.)

Nothing can be more *just*, or reasonable than this submission. Prudence directs us to adopt the safest mode of proceeding in all matters that admit a possibility of their not terminating happily. But by hearing, and obeying the church, in spiritual matters, we are

certain of not running any risk ; for she neither can, nor will lead us into error, since Christ promised that his holy Spirit should lead and direct her into all truth (*John* xvi.) that he himself would remain with her to the end of the world, (*Matt.* xxviii.) and, that being built upon a rock, the gates of hell should never prevail against her. (*Matt.* xvi.) Hence she is called by St. Paul, *the pillar and ground of the truth.* (1 *Tim.* iii.) Privileges quite inconsistent with the charge made against her of falling into damnable errors, or teaching falsehoods for truth, a calumny which demonstrates the wretched expedients to which those are driven who affirm, in defense of their wanton separation, that she has erred or may err in matters of faith. It likewise proves the security, together with the peace of mind which may be obtained by submitting to her authority ; whilst those who are separated from her, are divided amongst themselves, into thousands of discordant opinions, having no certain rule to direct them where to fix, but wander on, led by the blind guide of private judgment, and eventually lose themselves in the endless mazes of error.

But it is not less necessary and just, than *glorious* for a Christian *to submit to the authority of the church ;* as he thereby exercises the most

heroic virtues recommended in the gospel, to which the most *glorious recompense* is promised. We exercise thereby, *faith*, *humility*, and *obedience*. *Faith*, in believing what God declares by his church: *humility*, by submitting our judgment to hers: and *obedience*, in complying with what she requires of us. These excellent virtues are the certain marks whereby they may discover the sheep belonging to the fold of Christ. Of such he says: *I know them and they follow me ; and I give them life everlasting*. O, how *glorious* must it be thus to follow Christ, and be known by him ! Hence, we may discover the happiness of being members of the Catholic Church, the sheepfold of Jesus Christ. O, how great a blessing ! if like good sheep, we follow our pastor, hear his voice, and obey his commands, by living according to the principles of our holy religion, without which, faith will not avail us ; for *faith without works is dead*. (James ii.) We must not deceive ourselves by thinking it sufficient that we are of the number of Christ's sheep, by being members of his church, and have no care how, or in what manner, we live, lest when we hereafter say : *Lord, Lord, have we not prophesied in thy name*, (Matt. vii.) the answer may be : *I know you not ; depart from me, you workers of iniquity*. To a sound and orthodox faith then must be

joined *a virtuous and holy life*, as it is not only in regard *of principles*, but likewise *of our morals*, that Christ says to us : *My sheep hear my voice and follow me.*

#### PRAYER.

BLESSED forever be thy name, O, Saviour of the world ! who hast established thy church, as a certain way by which we may come to thee. Thou hast founded her upon a rock, and the gates of hell shall never prevail against her. We give thee thanks for the happiness we enjoy, by being included in her communion. She is that city set upon a hill, which cannot be hid. O, draw all nations to her. Bring back all those who are gone astray, who have unhappily separated themselves from her. Remove all obstacles that prevent peace and concord, among thy followers. Grant that all the members of thy church may practise the faith they profess, and never dishonor it by wicked lives ; but like good sheep, hear thy voice, and follow thee in the observance of thy holy commands, and thus obtain life everlasting.

My God ! *I give thee thanks for the favor thou hast done me : in making me a member of thy one, holy Catholic Church.* To this favor, dear Lord, add one more, that I may never

disgrace thy holy religion by a wicked or profane life. May I endeavor to adorn it by a holy co-operation of soul and body. As I have the happiness, O, Jesus, the bishop and shepherd of souls, to be one of thy sheep, may I always hear thy voice, and follow thee. Let not the voice of *strangers* sound in my ears, nor seduce me from thee, nor from the society of the faithful members of thy mystical body. *In the faith and communion of thy holy Catholic Church, I desire to live and die;* for this holy faith let me be always ready, by thy grace, to lay down my life and lose all that I have. *Amen.*

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## THURSDAY

### IN PASSION WEEK.

GOSPEL.—*Luke vii. 36-50.*

*At that time :* One of the Pharisees desired him to eat with him. And he went into the house of the Pharisee, and sat down to meat. And behold a woman that was in the city, a sinner, when she knew that he sat at meat in the Pharisee's house, brought an alabaster box of ointment : and standing behind at his feet, she began to wash his feet with tears, and wiped



them with the hairs of her head, and kissed his feet, and anointed them with the ointment. And the Pharisee, who had invited him, seeing it spoke within himself saying: This man, if he were a prophet, would know surely who and what manner of woman this is that touched him, that she is a sinner. And Jesus answering, said to him, Simon, I have somewhat to say to thee. But he said: Master, say *it*. A certain creditor had two debtors, the one owed five hundred pence, and the other fifty. And whereas they had not wherewith to pay, he forgave them both. Which therefore of the two loveth him most? Simon answering, said: I suppose that he to whom he forgave most. And he said to him: Thou hast judged rightly. And turning to the woman, he said unto Simon: Dost thou see this woman? I entered into thy house, thou gavest me no water for my feet; but she with tears hath washed my feet and with her hairs hath wiped them. Thou gavest me no kiss; but she, since she came in, hath not ceased to kiss my feet. My head with oil thou didst not anoint; but she with ointment hath anointed my feet. Wherefore I say to thee: Many sins are forgiven her, because she hath loved much. But to whom less is forgiven, he loveth less. And he said to her: Thy sins are forgiven thee. And they that sat at meat with

him began to say within themselves: Who is this that forgiveth sins also? And he said to the woman: Thy faith hath made thee safe, go in peace.

#### INSTRUCTION.

THIS gospel gives us a distinct idea of three different persons; the penitent *Magdalen*; the censorious *Pharisee*; and the merciful *Jesus*. St. Mary Magdalen doing penance for her *sins*—the Pharisee censuring her behavior—and our blessed Saviour justifying her conduct. In St. Mary Magdalen we behold an illustrious example of a sincere conversion—in the Pharisee, a picture of pride and arrogance—in our blessed Lord, a perfect image of that bounty and meekness wherewith he receives all sinners who approach him with true repentance. This gospel thus epitomized, affords excellent subjects for our pious reflections.

The scripture is silent as to the particular crimes of Mary Magdalen; but from what is said of her in this gospel, it is the general conjecture that she was a public sinner. It is however less our concern to know what her sins were, than to study how to imitate her conversion; we may observe two necessary conditions, which ought to accompany our con-

versions; without these, there will be great reason to doubt their sincerity.

First, her conversion was prompt, without the least procrastination; for she no sooner understood that our Saviour was in the house of the Pharisee, than she immediately hastened thither. She did not defer her visit to another time; she suffered no human considerations to prevent her going; nor was she in the least concerned about what the world would say of her. But, desirous to be released from the deplorable state in which she discovers herself, she rejects all other considerations, boldly enters the house, and going into the room where Christ was, throws herself at his feet, which she washes with her tears, wipes with the hair of her head, and kisses with all the ardor of *sincere love* and *perfect contrition*; in testimony whereof, she anoints them with the precious ointment of spikenard, which filled the room with the sweetness of its odor. Admirable proofs of a true and sincere conversion! That which had heretofore nourished her vanity, and contributed to her sins, she now makes the instrument of her penance, and public proofs of the change which grace had wrought within her. Those eyes which had served as fuel to inflame unlawful amours, are now drowned in tears. To those tresses which

had increased her beauty, and served as a snare to captivate the hearts of the unwary, she now pays no other regard than to use them as a towel to wipe the feet of Jesus. Her precious ointment so profusely spent upon herself, to improve her charms, is now more worthily bestowed upon her heavenly physician, to whom she had recourse for the cure of her disordered soul. Ah! would to God, that those who imitate the criminal life of this holy penitent, could be persuaded to resemble her repentance, which was not less prompt than permanent : *a certain proof of its sincerity. Having quitted the ways of sin, she no more returned to its dangerous paths.* As the love of God was the principal motive of her conversion, it kept her constant and faithful to him who had thus mercifully forgiven her. Behold what an excellent model we have to follow ! Let us then imitate this illustrious penitent, and with her hasten to throw ourselves at the feet of Jesus. Let no worldly or human regard induce us to defer our conversion. Let us deplore, and weep for our sins ; let us sacrifice, and renounce whatever has been to us an occasion of sin, and by our future fidelity to God, prove the sincerity of our conversion.

But, whilst in the person of Magdalen we behold a rare example of *sincere repentance* : in

the conduct of the Pharisee, we may see a true picture of *pride and arrogance*: a lively portrait of those *false devotees*, who value themselves for their own virtue, and take the liberty to condemn others. These are justly censured in the reproof given by Christ to *Simon*, who concluded that our Saviour could be no prophet, and that he was ignorant of Magdalen's being a sinner, because he permitted her to touch him. *This hasty conclusion proceeded from pride*: and whilst our blessed Lord's reply convicted him of *rash judgment*, it may also teach us never to take the fallacious rule of exterior appearances for our guide, but carefully examine the nature and circumstances of persons and things before we attempt to decide. Had the Pharisee considered that Christ, in quality of *Saviour*, came to seek and save that which was *lost*; and that it was not the healthy and sound, but the sick and infirm, who stood in need of a physician, he would then have found no reason to censure our blessed Lord, nor hold the poor penitent at his feet in contempt. Here we have an admirable lesson not to despise any, for their being notorious sinners, but rather to pity and to pray for them. And if we are not guilty of the same crimes let us not attribute the merit to ourselves but to the grace of God, that can change the most profligate sinner into a most

perfect saint. Thus, as no sinner ought to despair of the mercy of God, so we ought not to condemn another, or give him up absolutely for lost ; *for the mercy of God is infinite*, and he calls sinners at all times, as he is at all times ready to receive them. Of this truth, the conduct of Jesus Christ, in this gospel is an evident demonstration.

The Pharisee, whilst he censured our Saviour, condemned the penitent Magdalen ; but our Lord, by undertaking her defense, evinced such admirable bounty and meekness, as we can never sufficiently admire. He could have justly condemned her for the enormity of her crimes, and the disorders of her past life ; but he had regard to her tears, her humility and repentance. If his justice had been provoked by the one, his mercy was moved by the other. As he knew the secrets of all hearts, he saw she was penetrated with sincere contrition : he saw her criminal love of the world changed into a fervent love of himself. *If she had offended him much, she now loved him more.* This induced him to have pity and compassion on her. He takes no notice of the Pharisee's rash judgment, in saying within himself, that he was not a prophet ! and by an admirable similitude, justified the notice he had taken of her. Having pardoned her sins, he said to her : *Thy*

*faith hath saved thee: Go in peace.* Let us then imitate the bounty and meekness of our Saviour on all occasions, especially towards those from whom we may have received offense. A harsh and vindictive spirit is far from that meekness and charity, which is the characteristic of a true disciple of Christ.

## PRAYER.

ALL the actions of thy life, O, Saviour of the world! are so many admirable lessons to us. How long, O, my God! shall I be insensible to the example thou hast given me? It is thy grace that must make me docile, and enable me to practise what thou teachest. That infinite bounty and goodness thou didst show towards Magdalen can never be exhausted, but is still the same to all sincere penitents. Have then the same compassion for me, thou hadst for her. Inspire me with the same sentiments of sorrow for my sins, and love of thee. Happy, if by my prayers and tears, I could hear thee say: *Thy sins are forgiven thee.* I acknowledge that they are enormous and innumerable. May thy grace effect in me a sincere and a thorough conversion, that from this moment I may love thee with the whole powers of my soul, and never offend thee more.

May I love thee, O, dear compassionate Saviour of sinners! may I love thee with my whole heart above all other things, and all other things only in, and for thee. O, that I could love thee as I ought, and as thou deservest! O, that my heart might burn in seraphic flames of love! Ah! what great reason have I to love thee, dear Jesus, whose love for me has been so excessive? If love deserves a return of love, how ought I to love thee, who hast given me so many proofs of thy boundless love! Love makes thee bear with my miseries and ingratitude. Love makes thee pardon my sins and heap thy favors upon me. Burn, O, my soul! consume, O, my heart! with the love of a Saviour, so loving, and so good. O, God of love! fill my heart and soul with a most ardent and constant love of thee. May I love thee to the last moment of my life, and be happy in the enjoyment of thy love through all eternity.



## FRIDAY

## IN PASSION WEEK.

GOSPEL.—*John xi. 47-54.*

*At that time :* The chief Priests therefore and the Pharisees gathered a council and said : What do we, for this man doth many miracles? If we let him alone so, all men will believe in him : and the Romans will come, and take away our place and nation. But one of them named Caiphas, being the high-priest that year, said to them : You know nothing, neither do you consider that it is expedient for you that one man should die for the people, and that the whole nation perish not. And this he spoke not of himself : but being the high-priest that year, he prophesied that Jesus should die for the nation ; and not only for the nation, but to gather together in one the children of God, that were dispersed. From that day therefore they devised to put him to death. Wherefore Jesus walked no more openly among the Jews, but he went into a country near the desert unto a city that is called Ephrem, and there he abode with his disciples.

## INSTRUCTION.

NOTHING could be more absurd and inconsistent than the consultation which the chief Priests and Pharisees held among themselves. To acknowledge the miracles of our Redeemer, as well as the power by which they were wrought, and at the same time imagine that he, who had given sight to the blind, and raised the dead to life, could not escape out of their hands, exhibits at once the strength of their malice, and the weakness of their understanding. They met ; they deliberated how to put the Saviour of the world to death ; and the motive of their consultation was grounded on an apprehension for their own safety. *If we let this man alone, say they, every one will believe in him ! and the Romans will come and take away our place and nation.* Their fears were confined to the present life, lest they should lose their temporal possessions. They thought not of a future spiritual kingdom ; and thus by a false application of their wisdom and their prudence, they suffered in both respects. They lost their temporal kingdom, and were excluded from that of Jesus Christ. The Romans, as ministers of God's justice, came and destroyed their city and razed their nation ; and they have ever since been dispersed over all parts of the world.

Would to God that their conduct was not imitated by so great a number of Christians, whose only solicitude is for the things of this world, as if those of the other were not worth a serious thought. This is that worldly wisdom, which the apostle condemns, and which he declares to be an enemy to God. (1 Cor. iii.) Whereas the wisdom of the gospel teaches us not to consider what may please us now, but to look upon the past, and to provide for the future. The consideration of these three periods of time, will make us sensible of the loss of the past, the necessity of managing well the present, and the indispensable duty of providing for the future. In this consists that true wisdom which descends from above, and which the apostle St. James directs us to ask of the Father of Lights, from whom alone proceeds every good and perfect gift. (*James i.*)

By reflecting on the past, we bring the fruitless complaint of the reprobate, as contained in the sacred oracles, to our recollection. *Alas! what has our pride profited us? or what have our riches availed us? We have erred from the truth, and the light of justice has not shined to us.* (Wisd. v.) We may discover the little advantage we have gained from the time past, and which it is impossible to recall. Ah! should not this reflection convince us of the

necessity of taking a retrospective view of our lives, to perceive whether we have been on the gaining or losing side ; since whatever has not been done to promote our spiritual good, has been in reality doing nothing : for, can we presume to say *we are improved by idle diversions, vain amusements, or criminal pleasures ?* Can the thoughts of the past neglect of our Christian duty afford us any consolation ? or rather, does not the recollection of them fill us with regret and apprehension ?

As the present time, of which every moment is a monument of mercy, is allowed us by the goodness of God to prepare for eternity, must it not be an argument of the most egregious folly to misapply it, as it would be of the most consummate wisdom to employ it well ? Had we nothing to do in this world, but to eat, drink, and divert ourselves, an unwearied pursuit after its riches and pleasures might in such a case be very justifiable ; but how contrary is such a notion to what our holy religion inculcates ! We are taught to believe that the only object for which we are created, is, to love and serve God in this life, that we may be happy with him in the next ; and that this cannot be obtained but by the discharge of those duties which God requires of us. To this may be added, the shortness and the uncertainty of

time; so very uncertain, that we can call no part of it our own but the present moment. *The past is no more;—the future is not in our power, nor can we, with any certainty, depend upon it.* It is only the *present*, then, that we can make any use of, and that no longer than whilst we actually enjoy it. It must, therefore, be the extreme of folly and rashness, not to take advantage of time whilst it is in our power; and the best proof we can give of our wisdom, is, to manage it so prudently as to lay up a provision for hereafter. Hence this proposition: *This life is but a moment, but on this moment eternity depends.*

Since life, then, passes away like a shadow—since we are incessantly hastening towards death, which will be immediately succeeded by a happy or miserable eternity, what can be called a more extreme degree of folly, or rather frenzy, than to neglect to provide for eternity? Good God! under the uncertainty of having but a few moments to live, and the certainty that my eternal happiness or misery depends on the good or bad use I may make of them, shall I not exert the utmost diligence in employing them well. O, let the consideration of this awful truth sink deep in our hearts, lest we should hereafter have cause to regret our folly in abusing the time present, when the means

to redeem it are lost in the gulf of eternity : when the *past*, *present*, and *future* will remain incessantly before our eyes : *the past time ill spent will be to us a constant subject of affliction ; the present punishment will incessantly torment us, and the prospect of future never-ending miseries will overwhelm us in despair.* Behold the fatal condition of thousands, who have permitted themselves to become the deluded victims of their folly. If, then, we have any regard for our eternal salvation, or desire to avoid their misery, let us not imitate their madness, but reflect upon, and correct our past errors ; let us prudently manage the *present time*, whilst it is in our power, and so provide *for the future*, as to secure our eternal salvation

#### PRAYER.

O, BOUNTIFUL Author of time ! make me comprehend the true value of those precious moments thou art pleased to bestow upon me. Thy goodness, O, Lord, is admirable in bearing with me, and allowing me time to prepare for eternity. O let me no longer insult thy goodness, by abusing thy mercy ! Teach me that true wisdom, whereby I may *learn the difference between time and eternity ;* between the transitory things of this world, and the permanent

riches of the next. May I, through the assistance of thy grace, carefully improve the present time, and wisely provide for the future. May I endeavor to redeem the errors of my past life, and from this moment turn the remainder of it to the best advantage. For this purpose, I implore the aid of thy grace, since without it I can do nothing.

O, my soul! let us learn to set a just value upon time. Since time is given us to prepare for eternity, shall we devote it to sin and folly? Deliver me, O, God, from so extravagant a madness; make me so dispose of every moment of my life, as to answer thy gracious purpose in bestowing it upon me. Time, alas! will soon end, and be followed by an endless eternity. If I desire salvation, I must spend my life in thy service, O, bounteous Giver of time! since every moment thereof is a monument of thy mercy, may every moment of my existence be dedicated to the love of thee. Ah! it is too precious to be abused, lost, or profaned by sinful employments. I consecrate all my hours, my days, and years to thee, O, my God! that through this short time I may pass to a happy eternity.

## SATURDAY

IN PASSION WEEK.

GOSPEL.—*John xii. 10-36.*

*At that time ;* The chief priests thought to kill Lazarus also ; because many of the Jews by reason of him went away, and believed in Jesus. And on the next day a great multitude, that was come to the festival day, when they had heard that Jesus was coming to Jerusalem, took branches of palm trees, and went forth to meet him, and cried : *Hosanna*, blessed is he that cometh in the name of the Lord, the King of Israel. And Jesus found a young ass, and sat upon it, as it is written : “ Fear not, daughter of Sion : behold, thy King cometh sitting on an ass’s colt.” These things his disciples did not know at the first : but when Jesus was glorified, they then remembered that these things were written of him ; and that they had done these things to him. The multitude therefore gave testimony, which was with him, when he called Lazarus out of the grave, and raised him from the dead. For which reason also the people came to meet him, because they heard he had



done this miracle. The Pharisees therefore said among themselves : Do you see that we prevail nothing ? behold, the whole world is gone after him. Now there were certain Gentiles among them that came up to adore on the festival day. These therefore came to Philip, who was of Bethsaida of Galilee, and desired him, saying : Sir, we would see Jesus. Philip cometh and telleth Andrew. Again Andrew and Philip told Jesus. But Jesus answered them, saying : The hour is come that the Son of Man shall be glorified. Amen, amen, I say to you, unless the grain of wheat falling into the ground die, itself remaineth alone. But if it die, it bringeth forth much fruit. He that loveth his life shall lose it : and he that hateth his life in this world, keepeth it unto life eternal. If any man minister to me, let him follow me : and where I am, there also shall my minister be. If any man minister to me, him will my Father honor. Now is my soul troubled. And what shall I say ? Father, save me from this hour. But for this cause I came unto this hour. Father, glorify thy name. A voice therefore came from heaven : " I have both glorified it, and will glorify it again." The multitude therefore that stood and heard, said that it thundered. Others said : An angel spoke to him. Jesus answered, and said : This voice came not because of me,

but for your sakes. Now is the judgment of the world : now shall the prince of this world be cast out. And I, if I be lifted up from the earth, will draw all things to myself. (Now this he said signifying what death he should die.) The multitude answered him : We have heard out of the law, that Christ abideth forever : and how sayest thou : The Son of Man must be lifted up ? Who is this Son of Man ? Jesus therefore said to them : Yet a little while, the light, is among you. Walk whilst you have the light, that the darkness overtake you not : and he that walketh in darkness knoweth not whither he goeth. Whilst you have the light, believe in the light, that you may be the children of light. These things Jesus spoke, and he went away and hid himself from them.

#### INSTRUCTION.

To love one's life, and by that means lose it : and to hate one's life to save it, though seeming contradictions, are yet in the gospel declared to be true by Jesus Christ himself. The Jews had for some time meditated how they might apprehend our blessed Lord, and put him to death. They now were resolved upon it, and also to kill Lazarus, whom he had raised from the dead, because on his account, many amongst

them believed in Christ. Their design was not unknown to our Saviour, who perfectly understood their malice, and foresaw its consequences. That he came to lay down his life for the redemption of mankind upon the cross, and to take it up again by his glorious resurrection, is clearly intimated when he said to his disciples: *He that loveth his life shall lose it : and he that loseth his life in this world preserveth it unto life everlasting.* He made a declaration to the apostles, and through them, to all Christians, that if, by an over fondness of this life, and the things of this world, we do anything contrary to our duty, instead of saving our life, (unless for a few uncertain moments) we shall lose it for all eternity. But if, on the other hand, we generously determine to sacrifice our worldly views and expectations, and even willingly part with our lives, rather than betray the cause of God, we may, indeed, lose our lives in this world, but shall find them again, by living forever, and receiving a superabundant recompense for our suffering, in the kingdom of heaven.

This important point deserves to be well considered by all, there being none to whom it is not applicable. By it is not only to be understood dying for the faith, like the apostles and primitive martyrs, but it also includes

all Christians, and in every circumstance wherein duty is opposed to interest, they must transgress the one, or suffer in the other. As this frequently happens, it were to be desired that Christians acted more in conformity to the principles of the gospel than they generally do.

What can we lose or gain in this world? Our possessions, riches, and estates, or part of them only ; perhaps some advantage or prospect of improving our fortune. Can we hesitate a moment in our choice, when we consider, that by doing what is contrary to truth, and justice, we shall certainly lose the favor of God and the happiness of heaven? Suppose even our existence to depend on our doing what we are forbid, or not doing what we are commanded : is not the consideration of eternal life a sufficient motive to determine our choice, and rather forfeit life than preserve it at the price of our soul? Can the prolonging our lives for a few years be a sufficient reason to lose our souls for eternity? Ah ! we must be strangely infatuated, indeed, if the world and its enjoyments could have so surprising an influence over us. It will be hard to find any one who professes himself a Christian, who will not protest against such a choice. How then comes it to pass, that the lives of so many declare their preference of what may be had

here, to the inestimable treasure they may obtain hereafter? This may appear a severe reflection upon their judgment, but it is no more than a natural consequence, drawn from the premises of their irregular conduct. If men acted by the rule of the gospel, injustice, fraud and deceit would not be so prevalent in the world. The practical part of religion would not be so much neglected, to follow pleasures. In a word : one of the great causes of the decline of virtue and piety, is a want of serious reflection upon the truths of the gospel ; for whilst men profess to believe in Christ, they do not reflect as they ought, that *whosoever would save his life, shall lose it : and whosoever shall lose his life for my sake, shall find it. For what doth it avail a man, if he gain the world, and incur the loss of his own soul ? Or what shall a man give in exchange for his soul ?* (Matt. xvi.) Ah ! how unaccountably rash, then, are those who hazard the loss of their immortal souls not for gaining the world, nor any part thereof, but a trifling share of its perishable riches, counterfeit pleasures and vain amusements.

## PRAYER.

SUFFER me not, O, merciful Lord ! to be so strangely infatuated as to place the transient

enjoyments of this life in competition with the solid and permanent happiness of the next. Let me rather, if it be thy holy will, be divested of all I possess, even life itself. Whatever trouble or inconvenience I may meet with here, I shall embrace with joy, provided I can but save my soul. I submit to be miserable here, if it be requisite to make me happy hereafter. My soul is thine, for thou hast created it for thyself. Since thou hast redeemed it at the price of thy precious blood, I will keep it carefully for thee, till thou shalt please to require it of me, and take it to thyself, to be happy with thee forever in heaven.

As thou, O, God ! art the cause of my being, no one can have so just a claim to my soul as thyself. *It was not for this world* that thou madest my soul after thine own image and likeness. No, thou didst make it for thyself, and that by knowing, loving, and serving thee here, I might be happy with thee forever. O, may I never forget my great, and ultimate destiny. Remember, then, O, my soul, that we belong to God, that we bear his image and superscription ; has he not told us that we must render to God the things which belong to God ? Yes, O, my sovereign Lord and Master, thou hast said it, and I here surrender my soul and my whole self into thy hands. Take my soul, O,

Lord, and receive it as a tribute justly due to thy divine majesty. Mayest thou totally possess it here, that it may possess and enjoy this hereafter throughout eternity.

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## MONDAY

IN HOLY WEEK.

GOSPEL.—*John* XII.—1-9.

*At that time:* Jesus therefore, six days before the pasch, came to Bethania, where Lazarus had been dead, whom Jesus raised to life. And they made him a supper there: and Martha served: but Lazarus was one of them that were at the table with him. Mary therefore took a pound of ointment of right spikenard, of great price, and anointed the feet of Jesus, and wiped his feet with her hair; and the house was filled with the odor of the ointment. Then one of his disciples, Judas Iscariot, he that was about to betray him, said: Why was not this ointment sold for three hundred pence, and given to the poor? Now he said this, not because he cared for the poor, but because he was a thief, and having the purse carried the things that were put therein.

Jesus therefore said : Let her alone, that she may keep it against the day of my burial, for the poor you have always with you ; but me you have not always. A great multitude therefore of the Jews knew that he was there ; and they came not for Jesus's sake only, but that they might see Lazarus, whom he had raised from the dead.

#### INSTRUCTION.

AS the sufferings and death of Jesus Christ are proposed by the church for the exercise of our pious thoughts during this week ; we may consider our dear Redeemer, in this gospel, as preparing himself to undergo those sufferings, and accept that death which were designed for him. When the time drew near, he went to the house of Mary and Martha, where those pious sisters entertained him with their accustomed charity and hospitality. Martha waited, and Lazarus, their brother, whom Jesus had raised from the dead, sat at table with him : but Mary, desirous to give her dear Lord a farewell proof of her immense love and affection, took some of her precious ointment of spikenard, and having anointed his feet therewith, wiped them with the hair of her head. When she had once before washed them with her penitential tears, and kissed them with the



most ardent affection of love and contrition, Simon the Pharisee condemned her as a sinner, but our blessed Lord pleaded in her behalf and sent her away in peace. (Luke vii.) Now the traitor, Judas Iscariot, murmurs at her pious generosity, and under the mask of compassion for the indigent asks why the ointment was not sold for three hundred Roman pence and given to the poor. Here Christ again becomes her advocate, and justifies what she did, not without a tacit condemnation of the traitorous apostle's covetousness, who as the Evangelist observes, did not put the question out of any real compassion for the poor, but with a view to his own private benefit, for bearing the purse, and what was put therein by those devout people who ministered to Christ and his disciples, he thought that three hundred Roman pence would be in his power, and that he might privately apply this money to his own use. Ah! wretched spirit of covetousness! which induced the unhappy Judas to betray his Master, and deliver him into the hands of his enemies, for thirty pieces of silver. This the holy Jesus knew, and therefore said, that whatever St. Mary Magdalen had done, was in order to his burial; signifying also, that it was the last time she should receive him into her house, or entertain him at her table. (Mark xiv.)

Among the several subjects which here present themselves to our thoughts, the most suitable to the present holy season, is to consider the *ardent desire* Christ had of suffering, that thereby he might redeem us from sin and death, and restore us to eternal life: *I have a baptism to be baptized with; and I am straitened till it be accomplished.* (Luke xii.) So earnestly did he long for the time of his suffering, that celebrating his last supper with his disciples, he said to Judas, *What thou dost, do quickly.* (John xiii.) As the redemption of man was the object of his coming into the world, and his sufferings and death, the means to obtain that end, he anxiously wished for its accomplishment. For this reason he said to his apostles: *I have earnestly desired to eat this pasch with you before I suffer,* (Luke xxii.) as being the last time, and which was to be immediately succeeded by his passion. After his prayer in the garden, as if impatient to wait the coming of Judas, he said to St. Peter, *Arise, let us go hence,* (Matt. xxvi.) and immediately went to meet his enemies, and delivered himself into their hands. The zealous prince of the apostles, drew his sword in defense of his Master, and cut off the ear of the high priest's servant; but our blessed Saviour immediately ordered him to put it up again

into the scabbard. He required no assistance, because he desired not to be delivered. His sufferings were his own free choice. If he had not willingly permitted the Jews to lay hands on him, all the powers in the universe could never have hurt him. And to convince them how easily he might have delivered himself out of their hands, with three words he laid them prostrate at his feet. He asked them whom they sought? They answered, *Jesus of Nazareth*, (John xviii.) As soon as he replied, *I am he*, they fell backwards on the ground; nor could they rise till he gave them permission. This circumstance, whilst it shows that his sufferings were of his own choice, also demonstrates the great and ardent desire he had of suffering. *Oblatus est quia ipse voluit. He was offered up, because he himself would.* (Isaias liii.)

From the consideration of the great desire which Christ had to suffer death, we may extend our thoughts further, and reflect for whom it was that he thus died. Ah! it was for us, for our redemption, and to free us from the deplorable state to which we were reduced by sin. *This will fill our minds with adequate ideas of his great love towards us, and of our great obligations to love him.* He died for our sins, which made us the enemies of God, and

the unfortunate objects of his just indignation. O, wonderful instance of divine bounty and goodness ! which the apostle thus describes with all the energy of inspired eloquence : *Why did Christ, when we were yet weak, in due time die for the wicked ? For scarce for a just man doth any one die : yet perhaps for a good man, some one may dare to die. But God recommends his love to us ; inasmuch as when we were sinners, Christ died for us.* (Rom. v.) We were sinners, and as such, condemned not only to temporal, but eternal death : and in this deplorable condition must have forever remained, had not the mercy of God from on high visited us. *Justice had pronounced the terrible decree against us, but mercy intervened, and reversed the sentence.* The Son of God suffered death to make atonement for our sins, to satisfy the justice of his eternal Father, and deliver us from eternal death ; making our temporal death, which in itself is so bitter and disagreeable, advantageous to us, by rendering it no more than a short and easy passage to eternal happiness. This is that immense love, which the beloved apostle thus describes : *So hath God loved the world, that he hath given his only begotten Son, that the world should be saved by him.* (John iii.) *Who hath also loved us, and washed us from our sins, by his blood.*

(Apoc. i.) Yes, it was for the love of us, that Christ suffered, died upon the cross, and endured all those cruel pains and torments, which are related by the holy evangelists.

That this ought to be the consequence of what he has done for us, is easily proved. But would to God, that we could as easily produce its effect! I do not mean a soft, tender compassion for his sufferings, or a pity for his cruel torments, and bitter passion; for though these may be symptoms of our love, yet they are not all that is required at our hands. No; I speak of a more extensive love. *A love which produces a great hatred of sin, the only cause of his sufferings*; an extreme aversion for everything that displeases him, and a solicitude to please him, by observing his holy commands. A love that makes us suffer for him with alacrity, and to rest content under all the dispensations of his holy will. A love that causes us to withdraw our hearts and affections from this world, and make us vigorously tend towards the object of our love, that we may be enabled to say: *I live, not I; but Christ in me, and I in him* (Gal. ii.) This is that love which he justly requires we should give him in return for his love; and it is thus we must prove the truth of what we assert, when we say, we love him. *If you love me, keep my commandments.* (John

xiv.) Without so doing, our professions of love are vain, nor will his sufferings be of any advantage to us. Whilst, then, we reflect on the passion of our Saviour, let the result of our meditations be a serious and sincere resolution to give him this proof of our love; and beholding what he has suffered to satisfy for our sins, let us be careful never more to take part with those who crucified him, or renew his sufferings by sin. It is thus we must honor the mysteries of this holy time, if we would make our devotions acceptable to God, and hope to obtain the happiness purchased for us by the sacred blood of Jesus.

#### PRAYER.

O, ADORABLE JESUS! blessed author of life! and eternal source of happiness! thou didst freely and of thine own accord, suffer death, that thou mightest give us life. Thou didst even burn with a holy impatience, till the time came wherein thou wast to suffer for sinners. Ah! what return are we capable of making for this thy boundless love. It was love, dear Lord, that induced thee to undergo with so much ardor, those cruel torments which thou sufferedst for my sake. It was love which nailed thee to the cross, and was the cause of

thy death. O, that I could, in some measure, return thee love for love ! I compassionate thy sufferings, O, divine Redeemer of mankind ! and admire the wonderful effects of thy love. Let this admiration produce the desired effects in my heart, of truly loving thee, and manifesting this love, by a faithful observance of thy commandments.

Ah, dearest Lord ! let me henceforth have no other desire than to love thee. Ah ! why should I think any object worth my attention but thyself, who has suffered so much for my sake, and shall I be unwilling to make thee some requital ? or rather shall I not attempt to secure the happiness of my own soul, redeemed by thy precious blood ? No, my Lord, and my God ! I will never be so ungrateful for thy love, nor esteem lightly, what hath cost thee so dear. *Because thou hast purchased my soul, I will carefully preserve it for thee*, and cheerfully comply with whatever may be necessary for its preservation. I will part with everything, nay, even life itself, rather than hazard the loss of my soul, or that all that thou hast done for its salvation should be rendered fruitless.



## TUESDAY

## IN HOLY WEEK.

GOSPEL.—*Mark xiv. 32-42.*

*At that time :* And they came to a farm called Gethsemani. And he saith to his disciples: Sit you here, while I pray. And he taketh Peter and James and John with him, and he began to fear and to be heavy. And he said to them: my soul is sorrowful even unto death; stay you here and watch. And when he was gone forward a little, he fell flat on the ground; and he prayed that if it might be, the hour might pass from him: And he saith: Abba, Father, all things are possible to thee, remove this chalice from me, but not what I will, but what thou wilt. And he cometh, and findeth them sleeping. And he saith to Peter: Simon, sleepest thou? couldst thou not watch one hour? Watch ye, and pray that you enter not into temptation. The spirit indeed is willing, but the flesh is weak. And going away again, he prayed, saying the same words. And when he returned he found them again asleep (for their eyes were heavy) and they knew not what to answer him. And he cometh the third



time, and saith to them : Sleep ye now, and take *your* rest : it is enough : the hour is come ; behold the Son of Man shall be betrayed into the hands of sinners. Rise up, let us go. Behold, he that will betray me, is at hand.

## INSTRUCTION.

THE Son of God had celebrated the passover with his disciples, and instituted the most holy sacrament of the Eucharist ; rising from table, he retired with them to the garden of Gethsemani, whither he had been accustomed to resort with the apostles, and therefore a place well known to the traitor Judas. Being about to enter upon the theater of his passion, he would open the first scene in a garden, as it was in the garden of Eden that sin was committed by our first parents, for the expiation of which he is now about to suffer and die. Having arrived at this place, he desires his other disciples stay there and watch, whilst he retired further to pray. But as Peter, James, and John, had been present with him on Mount Thabor, and there beheld his glorious transfiguration, he would have them also present at his agony, to be witnesses of what passed in the garden of Gethsemani. Having said to them : *My soul is sorrowful even to death, he began to fear and to be*

*heavy.* From this first station of his passion, let us accompany him, with all the tender sentiments, which sorrow, love, and gratitude can inspire.

As the life of the adorable Jesus, which began in the stable of Bethlehem, was one uninterrupted series of suffering, he would end it also in pain, and therefore commences his passion by an extraordinary sorrow, which proceeded not so much from a knowledge of what he had to undergo from the malice and barbarity of the Jews, as from beholding those sins for which he was to suffer. Although the prospect of the cruel torments prepared for him, might make some impression on his mind, still what afflicted him most was, *the sins of mankind*, not only those of past ages, but also those of future times, even to the end of the world. He foresaw the extreme ingratitude wherewith his infinite love and bounty would be repaid by Christians, and how few would profit by his death and passion, compared with the great number that would perish by their wilful abuse of his mercies, notwithstanding all he had suffered to save them. The thought of dying for so many ungrateful wretches, who by their sins would trample on his sacred blood, and again crucify him, filled his soul with so much grief, as to make him cry out, *My soul is sorrowful even unto death.* Ah!

how great ought to be our confusion, to behold Jesus thus abandon himself to sorrow, for those sins which we frequently take so much pleasure in committing.

Having expressed his grief to his disciples, he again retires from them, and falling prostrate on the ground, prays earnestly to his Father, that the cup of his sufferings might pass away from him : but with the most perfect resignation he adds: *Not what I will, but what thou wilt.* This prayer he repeats thrice, with the same spirit of submission: *O, my Father, if this cup cannot pass away except I drink it, thy will be done.* (Matt. xxvi.) The evangelist St. Luke adds that *being in agony he prayed the more. And his sweat was as drops of blood trickling down upon the ground. And an angel appeared to him from heaven, comforting him.* (Luke xxii.) O, astonishing sight ! Behold the eternal Son of God, prostrate like a poor criminal, begging for mercy, beseeching his heavenly Father, that the cup of sufferings might, if possible, pass away from him. See with what fervor and solicitude our Saviour prays ! O, what a reproach to our tepidity and indevotion ! He permits human nature to betray itself, in begging not to suffer ; but having voluntarily undertaken his sufferings, he is content, and concludes his prayer with the most

perfect resignation to his heavenly Father's will. Ah! how sensible must not the anguish of his soul have been, when it could force a bloody sweat from every pore of his sacred body. An angel is sent down from heaven to comfort him; but what comfort could the great Creator receive from an angel, one of his creatures! We may piously suppose that he, with the utmost respect, laid before our blessed Saviour the glory of his eternal Father, which he was always so desirous of advancing, as well as the honor which would redound to his own sacred humanity, from his victory over the devil: and the happiness of those who should be saved through his sufferings. These, or similar motives, we may suppose the angel represented to Jesus Christ, who, willingly accepting what he had voluntarily chosen, arises from prayer and goes to meet his enemies who were accompanied by the traitor Judas, who was advancing to betray him into their hands.

During this time, the apostles were in a profound sleep, without any apprehension for the safety of their divine Master. Their specious promises never to forsake him, were buried in a deep slumber. The holy Jesus, full of mildness and condescension, gently reproves their negligence; and even becomes the apologist for the weakness of nature. He exhorts them

to watch and pray, that they might not enter into temptation; and through them, admonishes us to be always upon our guard, that we may not grant the enemy any advantage over us.

There are many excellent instructions contained in the mystery of our Lord's agony and prayer in the garden. From his repeated petitions to his heavenly Father, we are taught to have frequent recourse to God by prayer, in all our troubles and adversities—to seek consolation from him, by an entire resignation to his holy will—and never desire to be delivered from suffering, but inasmuch as it may be agreeable to his blessed will. We are instructed to be *fervent* and *persevering in prayer*. We may further learn from the agony of Jesus, not to think all is lost, when we feel a repugnance to suffer, and not judge from the weakness of the flesh, but from the dispositions of our will. Christ, in the garden, made the opposition of his two wills apparent; by the one he is averse to suffering, and by the other he submitted to the will of his Father, and freely accepted his passion. By so doing he instructs us, that we must not be discouraged, when we find the flesh rebel against the spirit, but that we should endeavor to keep it in subjection: nor can its motions, how irregular soever

they may be, ever hurt us, whilst our will refuses its consent, and we do nothing contrary to the law of God. Lastly, our blessed Lord besought his Father to free him from suffering, though he knew, that having of his own free will offered himself to suffer, his petition would not be granted. This he did to instruct us in this necessary truth, that the divine assistance does not always consist in delivering us from troubles and sufferings, but in making us support them with a humble submission to the will of God, for which reason we say, in all our trials and afflictions, Lord ! *if it be possible let this cup pass from me : nevertheless, not as I will but as thou wilt.* (Matt. xxvi)

#### PRAYER.

How different is my conduct from thine, O, adorable Saviour of the world ! I do my utmost to deliver myself from that dejection of spirit in which I find myself at every affliction, whilst thou, the true repose of souls, dost willingly resign thyself to grief and to sorrow. Ah ! yes, vanquished by love, thou willingly exhibits to thy mind all that can afflict thy charitable, thy tender heart ; thou hast, O, Lord ! a sense of the evils to which we are subject, but from causes quite opposite. We are sensible of them,

because we are miserable; and thou, because thou art merciful. Through the immensity of thy love, thou hast compassion on us in all our afflictions, that considering thyself to have been subject to our weakness, we might seek our consolation in thee. Hence, thou dost assure us by thine own holy example, that although we find ourselves weak, yet we should never despond; that however overwhelmed with sadness, or sensible of our misery, we should never think ourselves abandoned by thee. May thy holy name be praised, O, God of infinite bounty! who hast thus converted our weakness into a means of bringing us to thee, by suffering with thee.

O, Jesus, eternal source of all happiness! the beatitude of heaven, the crown of all the saints, what excessive astonishment ought I not feel when I behold thee thus oppressed with grief? Ah, dearest Lord! can any thing be capable of afflicting thee, who art the source of true joy, the sovereign remedy of all our evils, the only comfort in all our troubles? Alas! dear Redeemer, thy heart overflows with love for us, and thy concern for our salvation makes thee sad! Thou beholdest, not only the torments of thy bitter passion, but also the horrible ingratitude of those for whom thou dost suffer. *O, my God! when I reflect on the unworthy use I*

*have made of thy bounty, I cease to wonder at thy sorrow : how ought I be covered with confusion, when I consider my wretched ingratitude towards thee ?*

O, true, and only happiness of my soul ! what excuse can I make for having spent my life in the commission of those sins, which caused in thee such excess of grief, as to force blood from every pore of thy sacred body ? How can I support myself, when I behold thee in bitter agony, shedding tears for the sins I have committed, and expiating by intense sorrow, those criminal pleasures to which I have abandoned myself. *Pardon, O, dear Lord ! through thy agony and bloody sweat, my past ingratitude, and make me more faithful to my duty for the time to come, that thy sacred blood may not be shed for me in vain.*

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## WEDNESDAY

### IN HOLY WEEK.

GOSPEL.—Luke xxii. 66–71.,—and xxiii. 1–19.

*At that time :* And as soon as it was day, the ancients of the people, and the chief Priests and Scribes came together, and they brought him into their council, saying : If thou be the



Christ, tell us. And he said to them : If I shall tell you, you will not believe me. And if I shall ask you, you will not answer me, nor let me go. But hereafter the Son of Man shall be sitting on the right hand of the power of God. Then said they all : Art thou then the Son of God? Who said : You say that I am. And they said : What need we any farther testimony? For we ourselves have heard it from his own mouth. And the whole multitude of them rising up, led him to Pilate. And they began to accuse him, saying : We have found this man perverting our nation, and forbidding to give tribute to Cæsar, and saying that he is Christ the king. And Pilate asked him, saying : Art thou the king of the Jews? But he answering, said : Thou sayest it. And Pilate said to the chief Priests and to the multitudes : I find no cause in this man. But they were more earnest, saying : He stireth up the people, teaching throughout all Judea, beginning from Galilee to this place. But Pilate hearing Galilee, asked if the man were of Galilee. And when he understood that he was of Herod's jurisdiction, he sent him away to Herod, who was also himself at Jerusalem in those days. And Herod, seeing Jesus, was very glad, for he was desirous of a long time to see him, because he had heard many things of him : and he hoped to see some

sign wrought by him. And he questioned him in many words. But he answered him nothing. —And the chief Priests and the Scribes stood by earnestly accusing him. And Herod with his army set him at naught: and mocked him, putting on a white garment, and sent him back to Pilate. And Herod and Pilate were made friends that same day: for before, they were enemies one to another. And Pilate calling together the chief Priests, and the magistrates, and the people, said to them: You have presented unto me this man, as one that perverteth the people, and behold I have examined him before you, and find no cause in this man in those things wherein you accuse him. No, nor Herod neither. For I sent you to him, and behold, nothing worthy of death is done to him. I will chastise him, therefore, and release him. Now of necessity he was to release unto them one upon the feast day. But the whole multitude together cried out, saying: Away with this man, and release unto us Barabbas. Who for a certain sedition made in the city, and for a murder, was cast into prison.

#### INSTRUCTION.

THE Saviour of the world being, through the treason of Judas, delivered into the hands of his enemies, soon felt the cruel effects of their

malice. Binding him with cords like a criminal, they drag him from the garden of Gethsemani to Jerusalem, before Annas, father-in-law to Caiphas, the high priest, where he underwent many indignities, hearing his divine doctrine ridiculed, his sacred person blasphemed, insulted as an impostor, and a seducer of the people. Under all these outrages, the meek and holy Jesus conducted himself with incomparable patience. Having been abused by Annas and the multitude, he was sent to the house of Caiphas, where the elders and scribes, his declared enemies, met to consult how they might put him to death: nay, their malice transported them so far, as to treat him with the utmost contempt, thinking of nothing but how they might satiate their revenge, and overwhelm him with indignity. It is not surprising, therefore, that they should set aside all regular proceedings against him, not having so much as the shadow of a crime to lay to his charge, so innocent and holy had been his life, so blameless and circumspect his conduct. They were therefore obliged to bribe false witnesses to swear against him; wretches who, by the law, ought to have been stoned to death. But not agreeing in their testimony, nor proving anything, the high priest asked our Saviour many questions, to which he made no reply.

Caiphas then adjured him to declare, whether he was the Son of God : whereupon Christ, who had remained silent in his own cause, when the honor of his eternal Father was concerned, spoke freely, and confessed he was. The impious high priest thought he had gained his point, and with a show of zeal, having rent his garment, he exclaimed : *Blasphemy, no need of more witnesses* : and having asked the rest what they thought, they immediately concurred with him, and pronounced Jesus *guilty of death*.

No sooner had the high priest and elders pronounced this unjust sentence, than the furious rabble began to treat Jesus with all the cruelty their malice could invent. They spat upon his adorable face ; they buffeted and blindfolded him, and then in mockery desired him to tell them who it was that had struck him. The barbarous treatment of the outrageous and inhuman multitude causes us to shudder. When we compare the majesty of our suffering Saviour with the baseness of those by whom he was thus treated, we cannot refrain from admiring the incomparable patience wherewith he suffered such ignominious affronts, and the exceeding love he had for those wretches who thus barbarously afflicted him. Like an innocent lamb amongst many furious wolves, was our most meek Redeemer among the mul-

titute. *He opened not his mouth, and when he was reviled, reviled not again.*

Though the high priest and elders had thus pronounced Christ guilty of death, they could not execute the sentence, that power having been taken from them by the Romans, to whom they were subject. But resolving to omit nothing in their power to accomplish their wicked designs, they consulted how they might prevail upon Pontius Pilate, the Roman Governor, to concur in their design. They represent him as a disturber of the public peace, a mover of sedition, and one who forbade tribute to be paid to Cæsar; *and thus is the sovereign Judge of heaven and earth dragged before the profane tribunal of an earthly ruler.*

Pilate, who had asked several questions of our blessed Lord, soon perceived that he was innocent of those heinous crimes the Jews had laid to his charge. He was therefore desirous to set him at liberty; but the high priest and elders were obstinate in their clamors, representing him as a seducer of the people, as one who had perverted them from Galilee to Jerusalem. At the mention of Galilee, which lay within the jurisdiction of Herod, Pilate ordered that he should be carried before that prince, who was then at Jerusalem. Herod was rejoiced to see our Saviour brought before him, on account

of the fame of his miracles, and expected he would work one in his presence. His curiosity was disappointed; for Christ did not reply to his questions, or to the accusations of the high priest. This made Herod consider him a fool, and as such he ordered him to be clothed in a white garment, and sent back to Pilate. The Roman governor would have been glad to exempt himself from any further interference with Jesus but could not. The high priest, on the one hand, insisted upon his being condemned, as guilty of death: Pilate, on the other, as warmly maintained his innocence: but that he might release him, and at the same time satisfy them, he offered to inflict some punishment upon him, but this would not satisfy them. He then proposed to release Jesus in honor of their paschal solemnity; but the Jews, at the instigation of the high priest desired that Barabbas who was then in prison for sedition and murder rather might be set at liberty. As for Jesus, they all cried out: *Take him away. Crucify him, Crucify him.* Thus a notorious criminal is preferred before the innocent, the holy Jesus; and the Author of life unjustly condemned to an ignominious death.

Doubtless this unworthy preference excites our indignation; but we should consider that whilst we condemn the Jews for preferring Bar-

abbas before Jesus, we pronounce *a just sentence against ourselves*. It is, alas ! to be lamented, that there are too many Christians who, though they conceive a just horror at the indignity offered our blessed Saviour, by a murderer being put in competition with him, and preferred before him, yet do not consider how near a resemblance there is in their own behavior to that of the Jews. To some this may appear strange. What ! Christians, who believe in, and adore Jesus Christ ; who honor and compassionate his sufferings, to join with his cruel enemies, and cry out : *Not this man, but Barabbas*. Yes, be astonished, O, heavens ! it is too true. What other choice does that wretched worldling make, whose desires and endeavors are continually occupied in the acquisition of the riches and enjoyments of this life, for the obtaining of which he barter his conscience, his duty, and his title to the happiness of heaven ? *The world is a Barabbas*, which he prefers before God. He cries out, not Jesus, not his poverty, mortification and self-denial ; but Barabbas. *Let me have the world, with its riches, its pomp, its liberties and pleasures*. The proud and ambitious, who prefer worldly honor to the humility of the gospel, demand Barabbas and reject Jesus. The libertine, who is so much attached to sensual pleasures, as to think of



nothing but gratifying his inordinate desires, makes the same detestable choice. In a word, whoever offends God by preferring his temporal interest or pleasures to his duty, prefers Barabbas to Jesus Christ. Every sin wilfully committed, involves us in the guilt of the Jews, or rather makes us infinitely more culpable. When they chose Barabbas before Christ, they did not believe him to be their promised Messiah, who was come to redeem them. On the contrary, they looked upon him as an impostor but we believe him to be the Son of God: we acknowledge that he died for us, and yet, we prefer the wretched and criminal enjoyments of the world before our duty to him. We will hazard the loss of God's grace and favor, with its eternal happiness, rather than deny the irregular desires of our inordinate passions. *Thus we prefer Barabbas to Jesus.* Thus the world and sin triumph, and Christ is crucified. Ah, detestable choice! fatal preference! truly deserving the everlasting flames of hell!

#### PRAYER.

ADORABLE Saviour of mankind! with what confusion ought I to appear in thy presence, having so frequently rejected thee for the trifling satisfactions of this world? How often have I refused to attend to thy divine invita-



tions; and resisted the sweet inspirations of thy holy spirit? Thou desirest to reign in my heart, O, sovereign Lord, the true life of my soul! and I have basely given the preference to sin. Ah! why am I not drowned in tears? How dare I presume to appear in thy sight, after so vile a choice? Pardon, ah! dear Lord, pardon the insults I have so frequently offered thee. O, may that mercy which moved thee to suffer so much for my sake, incline thee to have compassion upon me. Behold me, O, Lord! prostrate at thy sacred feet, renouncing all that I have hitherto loved more than thee. I once more resolve to continue faithful to thee, and implore the assistance of thy grace to keep these my resolutions inviolable.

O, Jesus, my adorable Saviour! what sentiments of sympathy ought to fill my breast, when I consider thee thus<sup>1</sup> injuriously dealt with? Thy whole life was a continued series of good deeds even to thy persecutors. Thou never didst, nor was capable of committing any crime, and yet thou art presented before Pontius Pilate, as a flagitious offender! O, my innocent Jesus! I sympathize with thee under this cruel treatment, to which thou didst so patiently submit that thou mightest suffer the punishment due to my crimes.

O, the excessive love of my divine Redeemer!

O, Christ, the Son of the living God ! Thou who art the sovereign Judge of the living and dead, didst permit thyself to be presented before the tribunal of Pontius Pilate ! I adore, praise, and bless thee, for this thy gracious condescension. Ah ! what confusion, to reflect that I have refused to submit to thee, and have been impatient under contradictions ! O, Jesus ! make me by thy grace more conformable to thyself. Assist me to repress all irregular motions of corrupt nature, resentment, and disquietude, that I may patiently submit to the dispensations of thy blessed will. Purify my heart from passion and repining. Prostrate in spirit, I adore thee, O, Lord ! and resign myself, with all that I have, totally to thy will, that I may live only in thee and for thee, during time and eternity.

## THURSDAY

## IN HOLY WEEK.

GOSPEL.—*John* xiii. 1-15.

*At that time :* Before the festival day of the pasch, Jesus knowing that his hour was come that he should pass out of this world to the Father : having loved his own who were in the world, he loved them unto the end. And when supper was done (the devil having now put it into the heart of Judas Iscariot, the son of Simon, to betray him), knowing that the Father had given him all things into his hands, and that he came from God, and goeth to God : he riseth from supper, and layeth aside his garments, and having taken a towel, girded himself. After that, he putteth water into a basin, and began to wash the feet of the disciples, and to wipe them with the towel wherewith he was girded. He cometh therefore to Simon Peter. And Peter saith to him : Lord, dost thou wash my feet? Jesus answered, and said to him : What I do, thou knowest not now, but thou shalt know hereafter. Peter saith to him : Thou shalt never wash my feet. Jesus answered him : If I wash thee not, thou shalt

have no part with me. Simon Peter saith to him. Lord ! not only my feet, but also my hands and my head. Jesus saith to him : He that is washed, needeth not but to wash his feet, but is clean wholly. And you are clean, but not all. For he knew who he was that would betray him, therefore he said : You are not all clean. Then after he had washed their feet, and taken his garments, being set down again, he said to them : Know you what I have done to you ? You call me Master, and Lord : and you say well, for so I am. If then I, being your Lord and Master, have washed your feet ; you also ought to wash one another's feet. For I have given you an example, that as I have done to you, so do you also.

#### INSTRUCTION.

BEHOLD what an admirable example of humility the Son of God gives us in the gospel of this day ! He stoops to the lowest office of a menial servant, and washes the feet of his disciples, even those of the wretched Judas, who had even then formed the design of betraying him into the hands of his enemies. Although this may excite our astonishment, still we must not be so far lost in surprise as to overlook its typical signification. By his conduct that

night Jesus admonishes us, that whenever we are about to approach the altar to receive the adorable sacrament of Christ's body and blood, (that stupendous memorial of his love for mankind, the institution whereof, his church this day celebrates,) we should purify our souls from every stain of sin, and adorn them with the heavenly virtues of humility and charity. *Having loved his own that were in the world, he loved them to the end. Nor could he bequeath to them a greater proof of his love, than by leaving himself in the holy eucharist, to be the food and nourishment of the faithful to the consummation of the world.* O stupendous love of our divine Redeemer ! We may justly exclaim with the royal Psalmist : *The merciful and gracious Lord hath made a memorial of his wonderful works ; he hath given meat to them who fear him.* (Psal. cx.) Yes, this is that mystery of love, in which we receive the body and blood of Christ ; and by which our souls are nourished to eternal life. Christ gives us his true body and blood and of this we cannot have a stronger proof than his own words in the institution of this mystery. He assured the apostles, that *his body was flesh indeed, and his blood drink indeed,* (John vi.) and he told the Jews, that *unless they eat his flesh, and drank his blood, they should not have life in them.* After

so *positive* a declaration, to question or deny *the real presence*, must be the extreme of *pride, arrogance or prejudice*. But without entering into unnecessary controversy to establish the *truth* of this adorable mystery, let us turn our thoughts to the consideration of *the dispositions in which our souls ought to be, when we approach the altar to receive the sacred body and blood of Christ*. What these are we learn from the ceremony of our Saviour washing the feet of his disciples, as recorded in this day's gospel.

The first is *purity* signified by our blessed Lord's washing his apostles' feet ; St. Peter, out of humility and respect for his divine Master, refused, saying : *Lord, thou shalt never wash my feet*, Jesus answered, *Unless I wash thee, thou shalt have no share with me*. Unless we are cleansed from all stains of sin, we must not expect any share in Jesus, nor to be worthy partakers of his body and blood. For this reason, St. Paul says : *Whoever shall eat of this bread, or drink of the chalice of the Lord unworthily, shall be guilty of the body and blood of the Lord. But let a man prove himself ; and so let him eat of that bread and drink of the chalice.* (1 Cor. xi.) The purity then, where-with we must approach the holy altar consists, in cleansing our souls from all sins, by a sincere

and hearty sorrow, in the waters of contrition. For this purpose God has instituted the holy sacrament of penance, wherein the priests, the ministers of Christ, wash as it were, our feet, our hands, and our head : for if he ordained in the old law many legal purifications to be observed by those who came to offer sacrifice, with greater reason does he require that we should purify our souls when we partake of the great sacrifice of the new law, of which all the ceremonious offerings of the Mosaic Law were but so many types and figures. But we must be careful to purify them *effectually*, and not deceive ourselves by mere exterior forms. For, though Judas had his feet washed by our Saviour, and was not made clean, so we also may, by going to confession, if we carry not thither a sincere contrition, *appear* to be washed, though not really made clean. Our contrition may be called sincere, when it creates in us a detestation of sin : when we grieve for having offended so good a God, and when our sorrow produces a sincere resolution, not only not to offend him any more, but even to avoid all the occasions of sin. It is thus we should purify our souls, and make them, in some degree, fit habitations for the adorable Jesus, whose sacred body we receive in the blessed Sacrament.

Another necessary disposition towards receiving the blessed Sacrament worthily, is *humility*. This we may learn from St. Peter, who, beholding his divine Master at his feet, to wash them, cries out with astonishment : *Lord, dost thou wash my feet !* And though our Saviour told him, he should hereafter know his reason for so doing, still he was not satisfied, but said : *Lord, thou shalt never wash my feet.* No, my dear and adorable Master, it is too degrading an office for thee who *art Christ, the Son of the living God.* (Matt. xvi.) It is rather my duty to wash thy sacred feet ; for I am thy disciple, and thou art my Lord ; I am thy servant, and thou art my Master ; *Thou shalt never, no, never, wash my feet.* These sentiments of true humility, so worthy of the prince of the apostles, ought to occupy our thoughts whenever we approach the altar. With a deep sense of our unworthiness, let us then say with the Centurion : *Lord, I am not worthy thou shouldst enter into my house.* (Matt. viii.) Ah, yes, Lord, I am altogether unworthy that thou shouldst enter into the miserable house of my sinful soul. But our humility on this occasion must be not only *interior*, but also *exterior*. Interior, by sincere sentiments of our misery and nothingness ; exterior, by a modest and devout demeanor that our interior humility



may show itself in the exterior, and the exterior be a mark of that which is in our interior. Thus disposed, we shall be prepared to receive *him who rejects the proud, and gives his grace to the humble.* (James iv.)

To purity and humility we must unite *charity*, if we desire to approach the sacred table as we ought. *I have given you an example*, says Jesus Christ to the apostles, after he had washed their feet, *that as I have done to you, so you also may do the like.* It was not only an example of humility, *but also of love.* A mutual charity, or love for each other, is what he particularly recommends to his disciples. *By this shall men know that you are my disciples, if you have love one for another*, (John xiii.) Hence St. Paul calls love *fulfilling of the law.* (Rom. xiii.) As the blessed eucharist is a standing memorial of God's love towards us, it is reasonable, that we should approach it with a sincere love for God and our neighbor. Can we behold Jesus Christ in this adorable mystery of love, giving himself to us to be the food of our souls? Can we reflect upon all he has done for us, which is so wonderfully represented in these holy mysteries, and not make him some return of love? Let such ingratitude and insensibility be far from the hearts of Christians: Shall the flames of that divine love which burned in the heart of

Jesus, fail to warm our frozen breasts? Can we behold him daily immolating himself, and mystically dying for us on our altars, and not be consumed in the fire of a reciprocal love? If love begets love—if we ought to love in proportion as we are beloved, how great ought our love be for him, who thus wonderfully manifests his love for us! Oh, let us then love him with our whole hearts and minds, and with all our strength: for we can never love him more, nor so much as he deserves to be loved: one of the best proofs we can give of our love, *is to love our neighbor*. Hence, let all emotions of hatred, animosity, or ill-will towards another, vanish from the breasts of those who draw near the altar of love, since we can never be worthy to receive Jesus Christ in the holy sacrament, if we bear hatred and malice against any one, or refuse to pardon and be reconciled to those who have offended us. Hear the positive command of Jesus Christ: *If thou offer thy gift at the altar, and there remember that thy brother hath anything against thee, leave there thy offering before the altar, and first go to be reconciled to thy brother, and then thou shalt come and offer thy gift*. (Matt. v.) Hence it appears evident, that we must be reconciled with the world, with our greatest enemies, at least on

our parts, when we dispose ourselves to receive Jesus Christ in the holy eucharist.

With these dispositions, we shall be worthy to entertain the Son of God in the house of our soul. He will then communicate to us, those graces by which we shall be enabled to increase in his love.

#### PRAYER.

GLORY be to thee, O, Jesus, the Saviour of the world! for that ineffable love and bounty thou hast shown us, in the institution of this adorable sacrament. I firmly believe that thou dost therein give us thy real body and blood. Excite in my soul, O, Lord! a vehement longing after this heavenly food. Grant that I may always receive thee with an ardent affection, a profound humility, and a consummate purity of body and soul. O, fire ever burning and never consuming! inflame my heart with a love of thee. Thou camest to bring fire upon the earth; cause it then, O Lord, to burn in me. O, King of heaven and earth! thou art rich in mercy, but I am poor and needy. Supply all my wants out of the treasure of thy goodness. May thy love wholly possess my soul, that I may die to the world, and live only to thee, who, for love of me, didst expire upon the cross.

Let me never more prove ungrateful to thee, nor abuse thy mercy. O, come now, and unite me so closely to thyself, that nothing may be able to separate me from thee, my God.

O, Jesus, God of infinite power, purity, and holiness ! what am I but a miserable wretched sinner, a worm of the earth, dust and ashes ? Nevertheless, sweet Saviour of my soul, thou vouchsafest to give thyself to me. Since thou art thus pleased to show me thy love, grant that I may appear in thy presence, clothed in the nuptial garment of charity. It is the earnest desire of my heart, O, my God ! when I come to receive thee at thy holy altar, to be totally inflamed with seraphic love. O, fire ! O, flames of divine love ! consume my cold and tepid heart. O, that I could appear in thy presence, divine Jesus ! and kneel before thee, with as much fervor as is felt by the cherubim, and seraphim, and all the blessed spirits of heaven.

How adorable are thy counsels, O, Lord ! how endearing the ways of thy love ! Thou comest, O, ocean of mercy ! fountain of living waters ! to overflow the earth with the riches of thy bounty. Water, I beseech thee, the dry and barren soil of my heart : open those cataracts, and let the sweet streams of thy grace flow abundantly, and make the sterile land of my soul fruitful in good works. O, true and

eternal happiness ! come and unite me so closely to thyself, that nothing may be able to separate me from thee. Transform me totally into thyself, that I may live, not I, but thou in me, and I in thee.

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## GOOD FRIDAY.

GOSPEL.—*John xix. 1-18.*

*At that time :* Then therefore Pilate took Jesus, and scourged him. And the soldiers plating a crown of thorns, put it upon his head : and they put on him a purple garment. And they came to him, and said : Hail, king of the Jews ; and they gave him blows. Pilate therefore went forth again, and saith to them : Behold I bring him forth unto you, that you may know that I find no cause in him. (Jesus therefore came forth bearing the crown of thorns, and the purple garment.) And he saith to them : Behold the Man. When the chief priests therefore and the servants had seen him, they cried out saying : Crucify him, Crucify him. Pilate saith to them : Take him you, and crucify him : for I find no cause in him. The Jews answered him : we have a law ; and according to the law, he ought to die, because he made himself the Son of God. When Pilate therefore

had heard this saying, he feared the more. And he entered into the hall again, and he said to Jesus: Whence art thou? But Jesus gave him no answer. Pilate therefore saith to him: Speakest thou not to me? knowest thou not that I have power to crucify thee, and I have power to release thee? Jesus answered: Thou shouldst not have any power against me, unless it were given thee from above. Therefore he that hath delivered me to thee, hath the greater sin. And from henceforth, Pilate sought to release him. But the Jews cried out, saying: If thou release this man, thou art not Cæsar's friend. For whosoever maketh himself a king, speaketh against Cæsar. Now when Pilate had heard these words, he brought Jesus forth: and sat down in the judgment seat, in the place that is called Lithostrotos, and in the Hebrew Gabbatha. And it was the parasceve of the pasch, about the sixth hour, and he saith to the Jews: Behold your king! But they cried out: Away with him, away with him, crucify him. Pilate saith to them: shall I crucify your king? The chief priests answered: We have no king but Cæsar. Then therefore he delivered him to them to be crucified. And they took Jesus and led him forth. And bearing his own cross he went forth to that place which is called Calvary, but in Hebrew Golgotha, where they

crucified him, and with him two others, one on each side, and Jesus in the midst.

#### INSTRUCTION.

THE spectacle which this day presents itself as the subject of our pious thoughts, is of such a nature as to demand our tears rather than our words. It is better expressed by the tender emotions of the heart, than the eloquence of the tongue : in a word, it may be contemplated in silence, though not described in the most pithy language : such are the sufferings and death of our blessed Redeemer. Having in the course of this holy week accompanied him by devout meditation through the various stages of his passion, we are at length come to the last scene, wherein we behold him *unjustly condemned to an ignominious death*. This cruel sentence was no sooner pronounced than executed by the Jews, with the most aggravating barbarity ; this, the church, his afflicted spouse, represents to us in a lively manner, by the mournful ceremonies of this day's solemn office. With her, let us accompany Jesus, bearing his cross to Mount Calvary, where he expires amidst those bitter torments which his exquisite love for us caused him to suffer. But let us first consider what passed at the Pretorian hall, and the tri-



bunal of Pilate, whither the high priests had dragged him in fetters, like a notorious malefactor. Here having laid many grievous crimes to his charge, his malicious enemies were most anxious that sentence of death should be pronounced against him. But Pilate, convinced of his innocence, and perceiving their accusations against him to have no other foundation than envy and malice, was desirous of giving him his liberty. This he might have done, in quality of judge, and by virtue of that supreme power with which he was invested : but being a weak man, his dread of incurring the displeasure of the chief priests on the one hand, and his desire of liberating the innocent Jesus on the other, induced him to have recourse to the following expedient. Knowing that it was customary with the Jews to set a criminal at liberty at the solemnity of the passover he gave them their choice of *Jesus* or *Barabbas*, in the hope they would give the preference to the former as the latter had been convicted of sedition and murder, but here he found himself deceived ; *not this man*, exclaimed they, *but Barabbas*. When he asked what he should do with Jesus, they cried out : *Crucify him, crucify him*. To assuage, in some measure, their fury, Pilate gave orders *that Jesus should be scourged*. Thus our attention is called to the Pretorian hall, where



we shall see these orders executed with the utmost barbarity.

The holy evangelists say no more of this cruel flagellation, than that Jesus *was scourged*. Let us imitate their silence, and speak only by our tears, of the tragic scene ; let us, I say, draw a veil over it, and revolve in our minds what our tongues cannot express. We may represent him to our thoughts stripped of his clothes, and exposed naked to the view of an insolent soldiery, who, binding him to a pillar, call together the whole cohort, to discharge upon his tender and delicate body, the severest stripes their rage and malice could cause them to inflict. Here we may behold the body of our adorable Saviour so torn by whips and scourges as to appear one entire wound from head to feet. We may view this holy victim, deluged in his own blood ; and once more leave that to our hearts, which our tongues cannot express, and speak only by our compassionate sighs and tears ; or, if we must speak, let it be in the words of Caiphas to the Jews : *What do you think ?* (Matt. xxvi.) Let every one put this question to himself : What do you think of Jesus in this sad condition ? of Jesus thus covered with blood and wounds ? Can you after such a sight ever offend him ? can you refuse him all the affections of your heart ?

This cruel treatment, barbarous as it was, did not satisfy the brutality of these butchers ; for, having exhausted themselves with scourging our Saviour, they exceed their orders, and invent fresh torments for him. Plating a crown of sharp thorns, they place it upon his sacred head and put him to the most exquisite pain, by forcing the thorns into his flesh ; and to satiate their cruelty, they add derision to their barbarity. They clothe him in an old purple garment, put a reed into his hands for a scepter, and kneeling down in mockery, say to him : *Hail, king of the Jews.* Having thus abused him, they drag him from the hall to Pilate, who brought him forth in that sad condition, and presented him to the Jews, saying : *Behold the man !* But far from being moved with compassion, they cried out : *Crucify him, crucify him.* Pilate still willing to save him, says to them : *Shall I crucify your king ?* They reply : *We have no king but Cæsar. If thou lettest this man go, thou art not Cæsar's friend.* Plainly intimating, that if he released our Saviour, they would accuse him at Rome, for favoring the enemies of the Emperor. Pilate apprehensive of incurring the displeasure of Cæsar, consents to their desire ; and from human respect commits an act of the highest injustice. *He acknowledged the innocence of Jesus, by saying*

*he found no fault in him, and yet condemns him to be crucified.* What a lively picture of human weakness ! of a criminal attachment to present interest ! to promote which, how many barter their consciences, and violate all the rules of equity and justice.

The Son of God being thus delivered up to the will of his merciless enemies, they hurry him from the president's house, and having a cross prepared, they put it upon his weak and wounded shoulders, and thus lead him out of Jerusalem to be crucified. The meek Jesus patiently submits to bear the heavy load, and like another Isaac, carrying the wood whereon he was to be sacrificed, he exerts the little strength he had left, and proceeds, attended by the chief priests and soldiers ; but exhausted from the blood he had lost by the scourging at the pillar, he faints by the way, and sinks beneath his heavy burden. The barbarous Jews urge him to go on, but finding him unable, they oblige Simon the Cyrenean to help him to carry the cross ; not from compassion for Jesus Christ, but apprehensive he should die before he had suffered the torments they had designed to inflict upon him. At length, having arrived at Mount Calvary, they strip him of his clothes, and fasten him to the cross, driving large rough nails through his hands and feet. Then raising

up the cross, and permitting it to fall into the hole made in the ground for its reception, the violence of the shock made his wounds bleed afresh, and caused him more exquisite pain than he had hitherto undergone. In this manner did the Saviour of the world hang for the space of three hours, suffering the most cruel torments, exposed naked to the sharp air, and bitter reproaches of his enemies, who, not content with the cruelty they had exercised upon his body, endeavor by their horrid blasphemies to torment and wound his holy soul ; reproaching him with having called himself the Son of God, and desiring him to descend from the cross, that they might believe in him.

In affliction, it is a consolation to have some friends to compassionate our sufferings ; but how few did Jesus find ! His disciples and followers had forsaken him. He saw indeed his virgin mother, his beloved disciples, and Mary Magdalen, standing by his cross ; but the sight of them, overwhelmed with grief, only tended to increase his sorrow. It is some consolation to be pitied by those who suffer with us ; but our blessed Saviour was reviled and blasphemed by one who was crucified with him. Add to this, that interior desolation which forced him to exclaim : *My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me*, (Matt. xxvi.) not that

the divinity had abandoned the humanity of Jesus Christ, for being hypostatically united thereto, he always enjoyed the beatific vision ; but because he was at that time deprived of those interior consolations, which might afford him comfort and support under those inexplicable sufferings, which he bore with inimitable patience. He cried out : *I thirst*, expressing thereby, not only his great corporal thirst, and the pain it gave him, but also his much greater spiritual thirst for the salvation of mankind : with the same love for sinners, he again cried out : *Consummatum est*. (Yes, blessed Jesus ! the glorious and arduous work of man's redemption *is finished*.) And having added, *Father into thy hands I commend my spirit*, he bowed down his head, and expired. Thus died the Author of Life, the Redeemer of mankind, the Son of the living God, the Prince of Peace, the Father of the world to come, our comforter, our help, and our only hope. Thus, like a good shepherd, did he fulfil his promise : *I lay down my life for my sheep*. (John x.) Thus did he die for us, and to teach us to die as he did, with submission and resignation to the will of God, and restore into the hands of our Creator, that soul which he gave us. *O, may my soul die the death of the just*.

Having thus beheld the various torments

our blessed Lord was pleased to suffer for us, what sentiments ought the consideration of them produce in our hearts? What are the practical lessons we should learn from his passion, what should be the fruit of our meditations on the sufferings of the Son of God? These are the objects which the Church has in view, when laying before us the mysteries of this holy time. Let us then attentively consider what we should learn from every circumstance of our Saviour's passion. From his silence under the false accusations of his enemies, at the judgment-seat of Pilate, we learn to be *patient and meek* under all provocations and injuries, not to be overcome by anger or desire of revenge. If we would defend ourselves against those who would do us an injury, let it be with the spirit of *mildness and charity*, such as justice may require. To give way to passion upon every slight contradiction or word, spoken perhaps through inadvertency and without malice, is far from that meekness and patience, of which our blessed Lord has set us the example. From the conduct of Pilate in condemning Jesus Christ unjustly, and against his own conscience, we learn the direful effects of being biased by, or suffering temporal interest to prevail over our duty. He seemed determined to set Jesus at liberty, but when

the chief priests threatened to complain of him to the emperor, he, through fear of losing the favor of his prince, gave his consent to their cruel and unjust demand. Ah! it were to be wished that he had no followers; but, alas! there are too many, who when their *private interest* is not concerned, seem zealous enough for truth and justice, but when any advantage is to be obtained, instantly sacrifice conscience, honor, equity and truth to *this idol*, and basely give up what they before seemed so strenuously to defend: thereby imitating Pilate, who condemned Jesus to be crucified, through fear of forfeiting the friendship of Cæsar. How contrary is this to the spirit of the gospel, how can such persons call themselves Christians, or followers of Christ? We are also taught from the charity of Jesus in praying for those who so barbarously crucified him, that divine lesson of praying for those who injure and persecute us. And from his recommending his spirit into the hands of his heavenly Father, we are admonished to dedicate all our moments entirely to God as the ultimate end of all our desires. Let us then practise these salutary lessons which Christ reads to us from the cross: let him be the model of all our actions: let it be our only care to live in his fear, and then we shall most assuredly die in his favor.



God said to Moses : *Work according to the pattern which was given thee in the mount.* The pattern which we must imitate in converting our souls into the mystical temples of the living God, is here set before us on the mount of Calvary. There we behold Jesus, the author and finisher of our faith, undergoing the torments of the cross, and despising its shame : Let Jesus then be the model of all our actions : and, considering what he has suffered to make atonement for our sins, let us learn to bewail them with the most sincere compunction. Let his sacred passion excite in us an extreme horror of what is displeasing to God, and which he punished so rigorously in the person of his beloved Son. Ah ! if the view of those torments our divine Redeemer suffered, excite in us a just abhorrence of the cruelty of the Jews, is it possible that we should at the same time take part with, or rather exceed them in their cruelty, by renewing his sufferings, trampling on his sacred blood, and crucifying him again, which in reality we do as often as we wilfully commit sin ? Being therefore infinitely more culpable than they were, we must expect a more severe punishment : but if as good Christians, we walk in the observance of what he commands ; if we follow him in the narrow path of his holy cross, it will lead us to eternal



life ; and thus by participating in his sufferings here, we shall become partakers of his glory hereafter.

## PRAYER.

DEAR Redeemer of my soul ! who sufferedst so many cruel torments for my sake ! what thanksgiving can I make, adequate to the immensity of thy love ? O, may the recollection thereof never be obliterated from my memory : may I never forget that thou didst die for me, that I might effectually die to sin, to the world, its vanities and follies, and all affection to creatures. Thou, O, sweet and amiable Saviour ! hast shown thyself a truly good shepherd, in giving thy life for thy sheep. Have mercy therefore on me, O, my God ! and grant that in all things I may truly please thee ; at all times be willing to suffer and lay down my life for thy sake. O, my crucified Jesus ! I adore thy sacred wounds, and humbly beg thou wouldst inflame my heart with thy love. O, sweetness of my heart, and life of my soul ! consume my heart in the flames of a most ardent love. Transform me totally into thyself, my Lord, and my God.

Hail, sweet Jesus ! may praise, honor, and glory be given thee, O, Christ, who vouchsafedst to suffer such cruel torments from thy creatures !

I adore thee, O, God of love ! God of patience, mercy and goodness ! I adore thee, covered with wounds, dying in torments, insulted, mocked, and derided by thy cruel and implacable enemies, who, not content with having so barbarously treated thy sacred body, seek by horrid blasphemies and injurious reproaches, to afflict thy sacred soul. Thou who art the eternal truth, art mocked as an impostor. They bid thee come down from the cross, and save thyself, who in an instant couldst destroy the fabric of the universe. Ah, wretches ! it is love—not your nails, that fixes Jesus on the cross. It was love that crucified him, without it, all your power over him, had been in vain.

O, adorable Redeemer ! the life of my soul ! my Lord and my God ! I am lost in the contemplation of these miracles of love and goodness. How great is thy love ! How invincible thy patience ! How insatiable thy desire of suffering ! Not content to love me with an infinite love, thou wouldst suffer infinite torments for me. Am I not therefore obliged, O, Lord, to return love for love, by suffering for, and with thee ? I desire to love thee beyond measure, to suffer whatever thou shalt please to ordain or permit. How wonderful, O, Lord, is the force of thy love ! Thou didst not think three hours too long to hang on the cross under

the most excruciating torments for our salvation, that in thy sufferings we might find consolation, and a remedy for all our evils. Whilst suspended on the cross, every moment brings with it an aggravation of thy torments, by the weight of thy sacred body, which gradually occasions the wounds of thy hands and feet to open still wider and wider: but love supports thee under all. Thy cruel enemies insult thee, everything contributes to increase thy pain, and we only, O, boundless love! reap the benefit of thy sufferings. O, thou divine, thou innocent lamb of God! thou reservest to thyself all the bitterness of thy cross, and desirest that it should be to me the source of all sweetness and delights. O, may it be my health and comfort here, and my eternal felicity hereafter.

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## HOLY SATURDAY.

GOSPEL.—*Matt.* xxviii. 1-7.

*At that time:* In the end of the Sabbath, when it began to dawn towards the first day of the week, came Mary Magdalen and the other Mary to the sepulcher. And behold there was

a great earthquake. For an angel of the Lord descended from heaven : and coming, rolled back the stone, and sat upon it : and his countenance was as lightning, and his raiment as snow. And for fear of him, the guards were struck with terror, and became as dead men. And the angel answering, said to the women : fear not you ; for I know that you seek Jesus who was crucified. He is not here, for he is risen as he said : Come, and see the place where the Lord was laid. And going quickly, tell ye his disciples that he is risen : and behold he will go before you into Galilee : there you shall see him. Lo I have foretold it to you.

#### INSTRUCTION.

THE tragical scene of the sufferings of our blessed Saviour being now closed, a prospect bright and glorious opens to our view. Having shed our pious tears for the crucifixion of Jesus, and having seen him laid in his sepulcher ; the church now invites us to repair thither with the devout women, that with them, we may rejoice at the glorious tidings of his resurrection. *He is not here, for he has risen, as he said : Let us go in spirit,* and view the place where the Lord was laid. An angel of the Lord has descended, and rolled away the stone

from the door of the monument, through fear of whom, the guards were struck with terror, and became like dead men. But to St. Mary Magdalen and the other Mary he said: *Fear not, I know you seek Jesus who was crucified. He is not here, for he is risen as he said. Come, and see the place where the Lord was laid.* The joy of these holy women was doubtless excessive: their pious transports may be easily conceived: when, on entering the monument, they found what the angel had said was true. It is no wonder then that they hastened back to tell the apostles that Christ was risen. Their love was communicative, and burned with a sacred impatience that others should partake of the favor they had received.

Having indulged our devotion by meditating on the sorrowful mysteries of the death of Jesus, let us now prepare to celebrate the joyful event of his glorious resurrection. To render this duty the more acceptable to him, let us learn from these holy women, what our dispositions should be, and how we ought to receive the glad tidings of the resurrection of our Saviour from the dead. *St. Mary Magdalen and the other Mary went early in the morning of the Sabbath, to the sepulcher, bewailing the loss of their dear and adorable Master, and carried perfumes and precious ointment*

with them, to anoint his holy body. They went *betimes*. Their early devotion was recompensed with hearing, even before the apostles, the joyful tidings that Christ was risen. *Nothing is more pleasing to God, than a prompt, an early devotion.* Zeal and fervor are the two wings, by which our souls are raised up to God. Lukewarmness and indifference are as weights attached to our feet, to keep us down. Had Magdalen and Mary consulted their ease, and deferred going to the sepulcher till later in the day they would have lost the happiness they enjoyed of being told by an angel that Christ was risen. Their fervor and devotion is therefore proposed for our imitation, that with them we may repair to the monument of Jesus. Though we cannot expect, like them, to hear from the mouth of an angel that Christ is risen, yet we may hear it from the voice of the church, which invites us at this holy time to join in her repeated alleluias, and joyful acclamations, in testimony of our gratitude for the blessings we now commemorate. Yes, Christ is risen, and we also must rise with him. We must rise from the death of sin, to a life of righteousness; from the grave of lukewarmness and indifference, to a life of zeal and fervor: *and we must first go mourning and weeping, like the*

*devout women, to the sepulcher of Jesus.* Their hearts were oppressed with grief for the death of Christ ; let us also mourn with them for our sins, which were the cause of his sufferings, and not the Jews, the nails, nor the cross, which were the only instruments thereof : *if he died to make atonement for our sins ; he rose again for our justification,* that we might also rise with him. To mourn for our sins, is the necessary disposition towards our spiritual resurrection, whereby we shall be enabled to say : *I live, no not I, but Christ in me.* (Gal. ii.) This sorrow is more especially requisite at this holy time, *when we ought to bury all our past sins, by a good confession in the grave of Jesus ; and by a worthy communion, rise with him to a new life,* otherwise we can never comply with our Easter obligation. Let us not then deceive ourselves : the true criterion whereby we may know whether our sorrow for sin be sincere, *is, when we not only make firm purposes of amendment, but sincerely endeavor to keep them.* When our future care of avoiding the occasions of *sin,* proves that we hold *it* in just abhorrence ; and when by a real and visible change, we make it appear *that we are truly risen.*

This change from a vicious to a virtuous course of life, is signified by the perfumes the



devout women carried with them to the monument. They not only went to shed tears at the grave of Jesus, but also carried with them precious ointments to anoint his sacred body. Thus, in disposing ourselves to celebrate the festival of Christ's resurrection, we must not only be sorry for our sins, the cause of his death and sufferings; *but this sorrow must also be accompanied with the sweet perfumes of love and charity towards him and all mankind.* Let us then, by works of mercy, anoint his sacred members, since he assures us, that what we do to the poor is done unto himself. Charity towards our neighbor will be the best proof of our love to God, who has done so much for the love of us; and if the consideration of the sufferings of Jesus Christ be not able to produce this effect, our hearts may be said to be more insensible than the rocks, which burst asunder when he expired on the cross. In a word, the approaching solemnity will be of no advantage to those who, instead of rising with Christ, remain dead in sin; strangers to a new life, and still under the power of the devil. Strange infatuation! to prefer chains and slavery to liberty and freedom.



## PRAYER.

DELIVER me, O, Lord ! from such folly ; from such base ingratitude towards thee. O, may I now seriously prepare myself to celebrate the triumphs of thy glorious resurrection, and bear a part in thy victory over sin and death ! May I bury all my past sins in thy sacred grave, and rise with thee to a new life. May I weep and mourn for having been the cause of thy sufferings. Let my sorrow be converted into joy, on thy resurrection from the dead, *by which thou hast perfected the glorious work of our redemption.* Blessed forever be thy name, dear Redeemer of mankind ! for all that thou has done and suffered for us. I desire, by loving thee, to make thee a grateful return ; and what, O, Lord ! can be more deserving my love than thyself ? O ! may no creature ever rival thee in my heart. *O ! may I love thee most ardently, and serve thee most faithfully to the last moment of my life.*

This is the least return I can make thee, O, dear Redeemer of mankind ! and what thou mayest justly expect from me. Thou hast given thy life for my sake, and by thy precious death hast purchased for me eternal happiness. O, boundless love ! excessive goodness ! Ah ! what return can I make thee, dearest Jesus ! what

grateful sacrifice of praise and thanksgiving shall I now offer thee? My whole heart, nay, my whole being is but a poor tribute of gratitude to thy infinite bounty and goodness. Yet, accept, O, dearest Lord! all that I am and have. May the sacred merits of thy bitter passion and death recommend me to thee, and may I from this moment, and forever, be totally thine.

AD MAJOREM DEI GLORIAM.

# VIA SALUTIS

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